

Birla Central Library

PILANI (Jaipur State)

Class No :- 973.16

Book No :- H365 v. 2

Accession No :- 29756

THE SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

THE SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

BY
SIR ARTHUR HELPS



JOHN LANE
LONDON & NEW YORK

1902

THE SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

AND ITS RELATION TO THE HISTORY
OF SLAVERY AND TO THE GOVERNMENT
OF COLONIES

BY
SIR ARTHUR HELPS

A NEW EDITION
EDITED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION
MAPS, AND NOTES BY

M. OPPENHEIM

IN FOUR VOLUMES

VOL. II

JOHN LANE
LONDON AND NEW YORK
MDCCCCII

CONTENTS OF THE SECOND VOLUME

BOOK IX

LAS CASAS

CHAPTER I. Administration of the Flemings—Emigration Scheme of Las Casas—Licence to import Negroes—New Scheme of Las Casas for Colonization—The King's Preachers	1
CHAPTER II. Las Casas succeeds in obtaining a Grant of Land on the Pearl Coast	35
CHAPTER III. The Pearl Coast and its Inhabitants	55
CHAPTER IV. Discovery of the Continent by Columbus, and other Retrospective History connected with the Pearl Coast	68
CHAPTER V. Some Account of the Religions of the New World—An imaginary Voyage	91
CHAPTER VI. Las Casas as a Colonist—Ocampo's Expedition	116
CHAPTER VII. Las Casas alone in the Land—Received in the Franciscan Monastery—Fate of his Colony	134
CHAPTER VIII. Las Casas becomes a Dominican Monk—The Pearl Coast is ravaged	143

CONTENTS

BOOK X

HERNANDO CORTES

CHAPTER I. The Expeditions prior to that of Cortes—His early Life — His Appointment to the Command of an Expedition—Sets sail from Santiago	160
CHAPTER II. Cortes refuses to be superseded—Sails for Cozumel—Thence to Tabasco—His first Victory in New Spain—Sails on to St. Juan de Ulua—Is chosen General—Enters Cempoala—Founds Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz—Sends Messengers to the Spanish Coast—Destroys the Fleet	179
CHAPTER III. Cortes marches to Tlascala—Great Battle with the Tlascalans—The Tlascalan Senate allies itself to Cortes—Cortes enters Cholula—The great Massacre there—First Sight of Mexico—Cortes enters Mexico—Description of the City	202
CHAPTER IV. Interviews between Cortes and Montezuma—Cortes visits the Great Temple—the Mexican Idolatry	221
CHAPTER V. Difficult Position of Cortes—Capture of Montezuma	239
CHAPTER VI. Consequences of the Capture—Montezuma becomes a Vassal of the King of Spain—Pamphilo de Narvaez arrives upon the Coast—Cortes quits Mexico and defeats Narvaez	248
CHAPTER VII. During the Absence of Cortes the Mexicans rebel—Siege of the Spanish Garrison—Cortes returns to Mexico	267
CHAPTER VIII. The Reception of Cortes in Mexico—General Attack upon the Spanish Quarters—Flight from Mexico to Tlacuba—Battle of Otumba—Cortes returns to Tlascala	277

CONTENTS

CHAPTER IX. Resolution of the Tlascalcan Senate—Cortes in Tepeaca—Forms a great Alliance against the Mexicans—Prepares to march against Mexico—Reviews his Troops at Tlascala	293
CHAPTER X. The March to Tezcuco—Cortes surprizes Iztapalapa—Expedition round the Great Lake—Final Preparations for the Siege of Mexico	307

BOOK XI

THE SIEGE OF MEXICO

CHAPTER I. The Spaniards and their Allies commence the Siege—Defeat of the Mexicans on the Lake—Mexico entirely invested—Council summoned by the Mexican King—Result of the first general Attack—The various Successes of Alvarado's Division—Impatience of the Soldiers—The second general Attack—the Spaniards defeated	322
CHAPTER II. Consequences of the Defeat—The Siege languishes—Cortes sends Aid to his Indian Allies—the Allies return to the Camp of Cortes—The Siege is pressed—The Mexicans will not treat with Cortes—Mexico is taken	355

LIST OF MAPS

1. Mexico and Central America *to face Title*
 From the atlas of Diogo Homem, A.D. 1558, in the British
 Museum.
2. Golden Castille 55
 From Cornelius Wytfliet's *Descriptionis Ptolemaicae Aug-*
 mentum, Lovanii, 1597.
3. The Continent of America 68
 From Diego Ribero's map of the World, A.D. 1529.
4. Gerard Mercator's Map of America, A.D. 1541 142
 From Winsor's *History of America*, ii. p. 176.
5. The Continent of America 178
 From Ramusio, *Viaggi*, vol. iii., A.D. 1556
6. The Gulf of Mexico, 1524 267
 From the letter of Hernando Cortes.
7. Ancient Mexico 354
8. The local maps as drawn for the first edition *at end of volume*

BOOK IX

LAS CASAS

CHAPTER I

ADMINISTRATION OF THE FLEMINGS—EMIGRATION SCHEME OF
LAS CASAS—LICENCE TO IMPORT NEGROES—NEW SCHEME
OF LAS CASAS FOR COLONIZATION—THE KING'S PREACHERS

THE life of a state has often been compared to that of an individual: indeed, the same terms are in common language habitually applied to both. We speak of the youth and the old age, the vigour and the decay, the growth or the torpidity, of one as of the other. But, in truth, such is the richness of Creation, that no two great things are found to be very much alike, when you come to examine them deeply; and most similes, even those of a prosaic kind, belong to the realms of fiction, and are but pleasantries, with which men beguile themselves and educate their imaginations.

The most striking fact about the life of an individual is its terrible continuity. To others this may not be so clear, but to the man himself it is fatally so. Considerable, and outwardly abrupt, events take place in a man's life; but they do not surprize him much, and they never interrupt his sense of the continuity of his being. Hence the inevitable remarks of the aged, that all life is but a dream, and that their youth seems to them but as yesterday. Madness may produce an apparent pause, but sanity knows nothing of the kind.

In the life of a state it is quite different. That being an aggregate, or rather a compound, of individual lives, is liable to great abruptness; and changes take place in

2 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

it, compared with which, anything that occurs in the life of an individual is in no respect commensurate.

In this history we have now come to one of those signal and abrupt changes which affect the lives of states. How changed is the government of Spain in the brief interval that has elapsed from the discovery of the New World to the arrival of King Charles in his dominions! King Ferdinand is dead; Queen Isabella is dead; Columbus is dead; Ximenes is dead; the old councillors, who stood round the thrones of the Catholic Monarchs—pillars of the State—are either dead, discarded, or enfeebled. A new order of things has arisen: the counsels, the interests, and the modes of thought of another race, the Flemings, are, for the moment, predominant in a part of the world which they had never influenced before. How ancient, now, the long contest between the Moor and the Christian appears! It is not a change of scene in Spain, it is a change of drama; and the advent of a monarch so remarkable and so powerful as Charles the Fifth makes it a world-wide drama, in which all the nations of any importance in Europe are to take a part,—and each of them a new part. For it is singular, and foreshadows great events, that large and sudden changes have at the same time taken place in other prominent states of Europe, though in none of them so great, and so pregnant with future change, as in the kingdom of Spain.

It is almost fearful to contemplate the way in which America, immediately after its discovery, becomes mixed up with all the political and religious turmoil of the Old World; and is hurried about like a captive monarch in the train of a restless conqueror, who, amidst the bustle of other conquests, has not time to decide upon what shall be done with his unfortunate prisoner.

It must not be supposed, however, that the injury done to the Indies by its connection with the Spanish court was of a direct kind, or such as can be traced to cruelty, corruption, or even to neglect, in high places. All that can be said is, that the affairs of the Indies did not meet with that continuous attention which they absolutely needed; and that their immense importance was not fully recognized. The historian is always an apologist,

and in that capacity is rejoiced to have any bright spot to dwell upon in the picture he has to present. I would rest the defence of the Spanish government on this one fact alone—on the gladness with which those, who have to write the early history of America, will ever turn from the confused transactions of unbounded rapacity and blood-guiltiness, which must darken and sadden the narrative when its course is wholly in the colonies, to the proceedings of the mother country, however inadequate these may have been to the occasion,—which, it must be remembered, was without precedent in the annals of mankind.

Those who have never lived at courts have been very apt to magnify the vice and treachery of such places, just as those who dwell in the country are prone to believe in the singular wickedness of towns; but, after all, Virtue, like the rest of us, being sometimes very weary of dulness, quits groves and primeval settlements, to take up her abode with polished people. And, certainly, whenever the course of this narrative conducts us to the court of Spain, even the most cursory reader cannot fail to have the pleasure of observing that there was at least sympathy for the injured, and generally in some quarter or other an earnest endeavour to redress the wrong, which stand in striking and favourable contrast with the terrible oppressions and misdeeds that meet his eyes at every turn in the pages which record the proceedings of the Spanish colonists. It is like coming into daylight again after sudden darkness. I cannot illustrate this contrast better than by an incident which occurred in Trinidad about this period of the history, and which will serve to show what enormities were occasionally perpetrated in the West Indies, even under the supervision of the Jeronimite Fathers. Such a narrative, moreover, will give us a deeper interest in the efforts of the Protector of the Indians, will explain his vehemence, and tend to justify his views.

Here, too, I must premise that Las Casas may, according to my observation of his writings and character, be thoroughly trusted whenever he is speaking of things of which he has competent knowledge. Seeing his

4 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

vehemence, an ordinary observer might be apt to doubt his accuracy, though there has never been a greater mistake, or a much more common one, than to confound vehemence with inaccuracy. Far from being an inaccurate man, he was studiously accurate, which is to be seen throughout his history in all manner of little things. His countenance,¹ too, is that of a first-rate lawyer, extremely benevolent, but at the same time indicating great acuteness, brilliancy, and even elegance, in the character. He was not especially fitted for an ecclesiastic,² excepting in so far as a man of the world, if essentially a good man, may make an excellent ecclesiastic, as often happens. He was, moreover, a gentleman, and in his history shows delicacy and kindness in suppressing names where there is no occasion to mention them, and where the bringing persons forward would give them or their descendants unnecessary pain. I make no excuse for giving occasionally these remarks upon Las Casas, as he is one of the principal authorities for these times; and to understand them, it is requisite to understand him.

The following narrative of what occurred at Trinidad, to hear which we are going to quit the court of Spain for a time, is given on the authority of Las Casas.

There was a certain man named Juan Bono, and he was employed by the members of the *audiencia* of St. Domingo to go and obtain Indians. He and his men, to the number of fifty or sixty, landed on the island of Trinidad. Now the Indians of Trinidad were a mild, loving, credulous race, the enemies of the Caribs who ate human flesh. On Juan Bono's landing, the Indians, armed with bows and arrows, went to meet the Spaniards, and to ask them who they were, and what they wanted. Juan Bono replied, that his crew were good and peaceful people, who had come to live

¹ The portrait of Las Casas is to be seen, if I recollect rightly, in a private collection at Seville.

² In a very naïve way he lets you see somehow or other in his history, that it was not so much care for the Faith, though he was a deeply religious man, as natural pity that led him to espouse the cause of the Indians, which, especially in those times, would have been thought so much the inferior motive.

with the Indians; upon which, as the commencement of good fellowship, the natives offered to build houses for the Spaniards. The Spanish captain expressed a wish to have one large house built. The accommodating Indians set about building it. It was to be in the form of a bell, and to be large enough for a hundred persons to live in. On any great occasion it would hold many more. Every day, while this house was being built, the Spaniards were fed with fish, bread, and fruit by their good-natured hosts. Juan Bono was very anxious to see the roof on, and the Indians continued to work at the building with alacrity. At last it was completed, being two stories high, and so constructed that those within could not see those without. Upon a certain day Juan Bono collected the Indians together, men, women, and children, in the building, to see, as he told them, "what was to be done." Whether they thought they were coming to some festival, or that they were to do something more for the great house, does not appear. However, there they all were, four hundred of them, looking with much delight at their own handiwork. Meanwhile, Juan Bono brought his men round the building, with drawn swords in their hands: then, having thoroughly entrapped his Indian friends, he entered with a party of armed men, and bade the Indians keep still, or he would kill them. They did not listen to him, but rushed against the door. A horrible massacre ensued. Some of the Indians forced their way out, but many of them, stupefied at what they saw, and losing heart, were captured and bound. A hundred, however, escaped, and, snatching up their arms, assembled in one of their own houses, and prepared to defend themselves. Juan Bono summoned them to surrender: they would not hear of it; and then, as Las Casas says, "he resolved to pay them completely for the hospitality and kind treatment he had received," and so, setting fire to the house, the whole hundred men, together with some women and children, were burnt alive. The Spanish captain and his men retired to the ships with their captives: and his vessel happening to touch at Porto Rico when the Jeronimite Fathers were there, gave occasion to Las Casas to complain of this proceeding to the Fathers, who, however, did nothing in the way of remedy or punish-

6 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

ment. The reader will be surprized to hear the Clerigo's authority for this deplorable narrative. It is Juan Bono himself. "From his own mouth I heard that which I write." Juan Bono acknowledged that never in his life had he met with the kindness of father and mother but in the island of Trinidad. "Well, then, man of perdition, why did you reward them with such ungrateful wickedness and cruelty?" "On my faith, Padre, because they (he meant the auditors) gave me for destruction (he meant *instruction*) to take them in peace if I could not by war."

Such were the transactions which Las Casas must have had in his mind when he was pleading the cause of the Indians at the court of Spain; and that man would have been more than mortal, who, brooding over these things, and struggling to find a remedy for them, was always temperate in his language and courtly in his demeanour. I feel confident that St. Paul would not have been so.

Returning now to the court of Spain, which this short absence in barbarous parts will have made more welcome to the reader, I will recount what took place immediately after the death of the great Cardinal. On that event the administration of the affairs of Spain fell inevitably into much confusion. The King, as mentioned before, was only sixteen years old; and it could not be expected that he was yet to have much real weight in affairs. It has been a common saying, that he did not give promise, at this period of his life, of the sagacity which he afterwards manifested. This is a mistake. Nobody knew more of the Spanish court than Peter Martyr. He was a remarkably sincere man, and his testimony in favour of the young King's abilities is very strong.¹ The truth is, that Charles was as a boy what he turned out to be as a man—grave, undemonstrative, cautious, thoughtful, valiant. No doubt he was very observant; and I think it is manifest that the information he now obtained about Indian affairs, swayed him throughout his reign, and, as it will hereafter appear, influenced him in the advice he gave in a great matter con-

¹ "With respect to the King, more could not be desired. He is endowed by nature with every good gift."—*Epist.* 608. See also *Epist.* 113, on the quickness with which the King learnt Spanish.

nected with the government of the Spanish colonies, at a period when he had withdrawn for the most part from all human affairs. At this time of his life he trusted to his councillors, like a sensible boy, was very constant to them, and exceedingly liberal to all persons about him.

The two men who had now the supreme authority in Spain, were Chièvres,¹ the King's former Governor, and his present Lord Chamberlain,—and the Grand Chancellor, Jean Salvage, called by the Spaniards Selvagius. The Chancellor settled all matters connected with justice; the other, those connected with patronage. Las Casas speaks well of the disposition of the Flemings, especially of their humanity; and he seems to think that the Chancellor was an upright man. Peter Martyr, on the other hand, inveighs furiously against the rapaciousness of the Flemish courtiers, and especially against that of Chièvres and the Chancellor. He says that all things at court are now venal: the Flemish courtiers are harpies and hydras; their power of swallowing money he compares to wells and whirlpools; and, dropping the metaphorical style, tells us in plain prose, that they remitted to Flanders

¹ He is called familiarly Chièvres by writers of that period; but his name was William de Croy, Lord of Chièvres, in Hainault, afterwards Marquis or Duke of Aarschot.

From the description of Chièvres, given by SANDOVAL (*Hist. del Emperador Carlos V*, lib. 2, sec. 35), it will be seen that he was a dignified, eloquent, judicious person, and an adroit man of business:—

“This Chièvres was a man of good presence and clear judgment; eloquent and careful in matters of business, and when difficulties appeared found means to overcome them.”

That last point mentioned in his qualifications, inventive adroitness in the conduct of affairs, may remind the reader of what Bacon notices in reference to those who gain the favour of princes:—

“‘Vidisti virum velocem in opere suo? coram regibus stabit, nec erit inter ignobiles.’ Here is observed, that of all virtues for rising to honour, quickness of dispatch is the best; for superiors many times love not to have those they employ too deep or too sufficient, but ready and diligent.” *Advancement of Learning*. On “the wisdom touching negotiation.”

Chièvres is accused, like the rest of the Flemings, and I fear with some justice, of having been rapacious and avaricious. But the charges of Spanish historians on this head must always be looked at with careful scrutiny before they are entirely credited.

[He died in 1521.]

8 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

one million one hundred thousand ducats.¹ Added to which, they appear to have taken but little delight in Spain as a country to live in, and were only anxious to get back to their own northern regions, as if they were the regions of the blest, "notwithstanding they do not deny that in their own country they live the greater part of the year most wretched, by reason of the thick ice." Then they make no account of the Spaniards, who "redden with shame, bite their lips, and murmur secretly."² One thing, however, Peter Martyr mentions as a great discredit to the Flemish Chancellor, which will not be thought so in these times. It appears that Selvagus was averse to the powers exercised by the Inquisition; and, on an occasion when the Chancellor was ill, Peter Martyr observes, "It would be for the good of the sacred Inquisition that the Chancellor should be gathered to his fathers."³ The practice of bribery on the part of the neophytes is alleged as the cause of the Chancellor's hostility to the Inquisition; but surely it may well be imagined that a lawyer would be very likely to view with great disfavour the mode of proceeding with witnesses adopted by the Inquisition.

The Flemish ministers were not without their especial perplexities. They did not know whom to trust, or what to do: and they were too cautious to act without sufficient knowledge. They did not even know the language of the country they governed. The King himself was busy learning it. In this state of things the public business languished.

The affairs of the Indies, however, gained much more attention than might have been expected at this juncture. It happened thus: as Las Casas had been at St. Domingo, on his way to appeal against the proceedings of the Jeroni-

¹ [In ten months. A nephew of Chièvres, a youth, was nominated to the archbishopric of Toledo, vacant by the death of Ximenes, the richest benefice in Europe. The office of Grand Chancellor, unknown before in Spain, was created for Selvagus.]

² *Epist.* 608.

³ "Unless Atropos cut his thread of life the Holy Inquisition would be overthrown, and the King's reputation miserably destroyed who suffered himself to be governed by such a monster."—*Epist.* 620.

mite Fathers, he had seen those Franciscan monks from Picardy, who had now been some time in the island, and, as the reader may remember, had formed part of Pedro de Cordova's company, when he set out for the Tierra-firme. These monks, with others, had signed letters of recommendation in favour of Las Casas, and by good fortune some of the foreign monks were known to the Grand Chancellor, and their signatures proved a favourable introduction for the Protector of the Indians. He soon enlarged the advantages arising from this introduction; and at last became on such terms with the Chancellor, that this great functionary used to give Las Casas all the letters and memorials from the colonists or their representatives, and the Clerigo then turned them into Latin and made his remarks upon them, showing what was true and what was false, or wherein he approved, or dissented from, the views of the writer.¹ Finally, the Grand Chancellor spoke of Las Casas to the King, and received his Highness's commands that they two should consult together, and provide a remedy for the bad government of the Indies.²

Again, therefore, great hopes might naturally be entertained that something effectual would now be done on behalf of the Indians. Las Casas prepared his memorials, taking for his basis the plan which the Jeronimites had carried out to Hispaniola, and which by this time they had partially acted upon. He added, however, some other things; amongst them, that of securing to the Indians their entire liberty. And he provided a scheme for furnishing Hispaniola with labourers from the mother country.

The outline of this scheme was as follows. The King was to give to every labourer willing to emigrate to Hispaniola his living during the journey from his place

¹ [Another result of the friendship felt by the Chancellor for Las Casas was the dismissal of Lope de Conchillos, the secretary. He and Bishop Fonseca had intrigued against the Clerigo, among other things writing to the colonists to send home complaints about him, and protests against the measures he desired.]

² "The King, our master, wills that you and I should provide a remedy for the Indies—prepare your memorial."—LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxxv, p. 372.

10 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

of abode to Seville, at the rate of half a *real* a day throughout the journey, for great and small, child and parent. At Seville the emigrants were to be lodged in the *Casa de la Contratacion* (the India House), and were to have from eleven to thirteen *maravedis* a day. From thence they were to have a free passage to Hispaniola, and to be provided with food for a year.¹ And if the climate "should try them so much," that at the expiration of this year they should not be able to work for themselves, the King was to continue to maintain them, but this extra maintenance was to be put down to the account of the emigrants, as a loan which they were to repay. The King was to give them lands (his own lands), furnish them with ploughshares and spades, and provide medicines for them. Lastly, whatever rights and profits accrued from their holdings were to become hereditary. This was certainly a most liberal plan of emigration. And, in addition there were other privileges held out as inducements to these labourers.

In connection with the above scheme, Las Casas, unfortunately for his reputation in after ages, added another provision, namely, that each Spanish resident in the island should have licence to import a dozen negro slaves.

The origin of this suggestion was, as he informs us, that the colonists had told him, that if licence were given them to import a dozen negro slaves each, they, the colonists, would then set free the Indians. And so, recollecting that statement of the colonists, he added

¹ "The emigration was to be conducted in this manner:—The King was to give to each labourer who desired to emigrate half a *real* a day for each person, big or little, for victuals, from the time of leaving his place of abode until arrival at Seville; at Seville they were to be housed in the *Casa de la Contratacion*, and were to be given from eleven to thirteen *maravedis* a day for food all round, so that the child at the breast would draw the same amount as the parents. From there free passage and necessaries on board ship to this Island, and there to be provided with food for a year, until they were able to support themselves; and if the climate should try them so much that they were unable to work at the end of the year, that which the King gave them beyond the year was to be a loan which they were to repay when they could."—LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxxv, p. 379.

this provision. Las Casas, writing his history in his old age, thus frankly owns his error: "This advice, that licence should be given to bring negro slaves to these lands, the Clerigo Casas first gave, not considering the injustice with which the Portuguese take them, and make them slaves; which advice, after he had apprehended the nature of the thing, he would not have given for all he had in the world. For he always held that they had been made slaves unjustly and tyrannically: for the same reason holds good of them as of the Indians."¹ The above confession is delicately and truthfully worded—"not considering"—he does not say, not being aware of; but, though it was a matter known to him, his moral sense was not watchful, as it were, about it. We must be careful not to press the admissions of a generous mind too far, or to exaggerate the importance of the suggestion of Las Casas.

It would be quite erroneous to look upon this suggestion as being the introduction of negro slavery. From the earliest times of the discovery of America, negroes had been sent there; my readers have already seen Ferdinand's letters about them; and the young King Charles had, while in Flanders, granted licences to his courtiers for the import of negroes into Hispaniola. But, what is of more significance, and what it is strange that Las Casas was not aware of, or did not mention, the Jeronimite Fathers had also come to the conclusion, that negroes must be introduced into the West Indies. Writing in January 1518, when the Fathers could not have known what was passing in Spain in relation to this subject, they recommended licences to be given to the inhabitants of Hispaniola or to other persons, to bring negroes there.²

¹ LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxxv, p. 380.

² "Especially that leave be given to them to bring over heathen negroes, of the kind of which we have already experience. Wherefore here it is agreed that Your Highness should command us to grant licences to send armed ships from this island to fetch them from the Cape Verde Islands, or Guinea, or that it may be done by some other persons to bring them here. Your Highness may believe that if this is permitted it will be very advantageous for the future of the settlers of these islands, and for the royal revenue; as also for the Indians your vassals, who will be cared for and eased in their work, and can better

12 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

From the tenor of their letter it appears that they had before recommended the same thing. Zuazo, the judge of *residencia*, and the legal colleague of Las Casas, wrote to the same effect. He, however, suggested that the negroes should be placed in settlements, and married.¹ Fray Bernardino de Manzanedo, the Jeronimite Father, sent over to counteract Las Casas, gave the same advice as his brethren about the introduction of negroes.² He added a proviso, which does not appear in their letter (perhaps it did exist in one of the earlier ones), that there should be as many women as men sent over, or more.³

The suggestion of Las Casas was approved of by the Chancellor and by Adrian the colleague of the late Cardinal: and, indeed, it is probable there was hardly a man of that time who would have seen further than the excellent Clerigo did. Las Casas was asked, what number of negroes would suffice? He replied that he did not know; upon which a letter was sent to the officers of the India House at Seville, to ascertain the fit number in their opinion. They said that four thousand would at present suffice, being one thousand for each of the islands, Hispaniola, Porto Rico, Cuba, and Jamaica. Somebody now suggested to the Governor De Bresa, a Fleming of much influence and a member of the Council, that he should ask for this licence to be given to him.⁴

cultivate their souls' welfare, and will increase in number."—GERÓNIMOS *al REY*, 18 de Enero, de 1518. (*Simancas. Descripciones y poblaciones.*) Colección de MUÑOZ, MS., tom. 76.

¹ [Zuazo's own description of his method of handling negroes should have given pause to a statesman:—"The fear that the negroes may rise in revolt is a baseless one . . . all depends on how they are managed. I find that on their arrival some are cunning and others run away; the whip for the one, and ear-cutting for the others, and I have no more trouble."]

² [In 1517 Roderigo de Colmenares, regidor in Tierra-firme, suggested that every Castillian coming from Spain ought to be permitted to introduce a certain number of negroes free of duty.]

³ "The settlers of Española all desire licences to fetch negroes, as the Indians are insufficient. This appears good to all of us, provided there be as many or more women than men."—*Memorial que dió en Valladolid* FRAI BERNARDINO DE MANZANEDO *por Hebrero, de 1518.*—Colección de MUÑOZ, MS., tom. 76.

⁴ [Lorenzo de Gomenot (Garrebod in Spanish histories), baron

LICENCES TO IMPORT NEGROES 13

De Bresa accordingly asked the King for it, who granted his request; and the Fleming sold his licence to certain Genoese merchants for twenty-five thousand ducats, having obtained from the King a pledge that for eight years he should give no other licence of this kind.¹

The consequence of this monopoly enjoyed by the Genoese merchants was, that negroes were sold at a great price, of which there are frequent complaints. Both Las Casas and Pasamonte (rarely found in accord) suggested to the King that it would be better to pay the twenty-five thousand ducats and resume the licence, or to abridge its term. Figueroa, writing to the Emperor from St. Domingo in July 1520, says, "Negroes are very much in request: none have come for about a year. It would have been better to have given De Bresa the customs duties (*i.e.* the duties that had been usually paid on the importation of slaves) than to have placed a prohibition."² I have scarcely a doubt that the immediate effect of the measure adopted in consequence of the Clerigo's suggestion was greatly to check that importation of negro slaves, which otherwise, had the licence been general, would have been very abundant.³

Before quitting this part of the subject, something must be said for Las Casas which he does not allege for himself.⁴ This suggestion of his about the negroes

de Montinay, governor of Bresa, and Master of the household of Charles V.]

¹ [But numerous special licences were granted. The Genoese are said to have made a profit of nearly 300,000 ducats on their purchase.]

² AL EMPERADOR PRINCIPE REY: LICENCIADO FIGUEROA. Santo Domingo, 6 de Julio, 1520. — *Coleccion de MUÑOZ*, MS., tom. 76.

³ [Don J. A. Saco (*Hist. de la Esclavitud*, i, p. 113) says: "Garrebod was badly inspired in selling his privilege to the Genoese. If the purchasers had been Portuguese, the contract would not have failed in its purpose because, from their establishments on the African coast which the Genoese lacked, they could have carried over as many negroes as desired. However, the Genoese were preferred because they were less feared than the Portuguese, at that time the rivals of Spain in discovery, and because the Spaniards were more accustomed to commercial intercourse with them."]

⁴ Las Casas is much misrepresented by HERRERA, who gives an

14 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

was not an isolated one. Had all his suggestions been carried out, and the Indians thereby been preserved, as I firmly believe they might have been, these negroes might have remained a very insignificant number in the general population. By the destruction of Indians a void in the laborious part of the community was being constantly created, which had to be filled up by the labour of negroes. The negroes could bear the labour in the mines much better than the Indians; and any man who perceived that a race, of whose Christian virtues and capabilities he thought highly, were fading away by reason of being subjected to labour which their natures were incompetent to endure, and which they were most unjustly condemned to, might prefer the misery of the smaller number of another race treated with equal injustice, but more capable of enduring it. I do not say that Las Casas considered all these things; but, at any rate, in estimating his conduct, we must recollect, that we look at the matter centuries after it occurred, and see all the extent of the evil arising from circumstances which no man could then be expected to foresee, and which were inconsistent with the rest of the Clerigo's plans for the preservation of the Indians.

I suspect that the wisest amongst us would very likely have erred with him: and I am not sure that taking all his plans together, and taking for granted, as he did then, that his influence at court was to last, his suggestion about the negroes was an impolitic one.

One more piece of advice Las Casas gave at this time, which, if it had been adopted, would have been most serviceable. He proposed that forts for mercantile purposes, containing about thirty persons, should be erected at intervals along the coast of the Tierra-firme, to traffic with merchandize of Spain for gold, silver and precious stones: and, in each of these forts, ecclesiastics were to be placed, to undertake the superintendence of spiritual matters. In this scheme may be seen an anticipation of our own plans for commercial intercourse

account of the suggestion as if it were made, not in addition to, but in substitution for other measures.

BISHOP FONSECA REGAINS POWER 15

with Africa. And, indeed, one is constantly reminded by the proceedings in those times of what has occurred much later and under the auspices of other nations.

Of all these suggestions, some of them certainly excellent, the only questionable one was at once adopted. Such is the irony of life. If we may imagine superior beings looking on at the affairs of men, and bearing some unperceived part of the great contest in the world, this was a thing to have gladdened all the hosts of Hell.

Turning our thoughts from bad angels to bad men, it is vexatious to find the Bishop of Burgos creeping back to power just at this period. For a long time the Bishop had been quite in the background: and Conchillos, Ferdinand's minister, who also formerly had great weight in the government of the Indies, finding himself without any authority, had retired to his estate. But now, owing, it is said, to the effect of sixteen thousand ducats, or because the Bishop had been so long engaged in the Indian administration that his absence was felt (for Las Casas is by no means certain of the bribery), the Bishop was recalled to the Council; and he opposed, as quietly as he could, the excellent plans of Las Casas for colonization. The Bishop said, that for these twenty years he had been endeavouring to find labourers to go to the Indies, and that he had not yet found twenty men who would go. Las Casas engaged to find three thousand. The Clerigo, too, could give a reason why the Bishop had not succeeded in getting labourers, saying that it was because the Indies had been made a penal colony.

At the time of these altercations in the Council, the court had been moving from Valladolid, in order that the King might take formal possession of the throne of Aragon.¹ In the course of the journey, at Aranda on the Douro, Las Casas fell ill, and was left behind, much regretted, as he tells us, even the boy King saying "I wonder how Micer Bartholomew is" (*Oh qué tal estará Micer Bartolome*). The King, young as he was, was likely to approve of a sound-hearted man like Las Casas, and,

¹ [Charles left Valladolid for Zaragoza in April 1518.]

16 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

though a person who has but one subject is apt to be rather troublesome, yet his devotedness elicits a certain interest for him. Moreover, anything that has life and earnestness in it is welcome to sombre people. I am particular in noticing this liking of the young King for Las Casas, as I cannot but attribute some of the King's future proceedings with regard to the Indians to the information he was silently acquiring from the Clerigo at this period. Thus it is that good seed is not lost, which should be a comfort to those who in their own time make great efforts, and seem to do nothing. In a few days the Clerigo, whom the court left ill at Aranda, got better, and he overtook them before they reached Saragossa. The Grand Chancellor received him very kindly. The great business of the reformation of the Indian government, of which the part only that was to be no reformation had been accomplished, was now to be proceeded with. Again, however, it was delayed,—this time by the illness of the Bishop of Burgos, who must now be consulted; though, as Las Casas retained the full favour with the Chancellor, of which there is good evidence, the Bishop was not able to thwart the views of the Clerigo. Indeed, Las Casas received at this juncture the evidence of Father Roman concerning the horrible cruelties committed by one of the captains of Pedrarias, named Espinosa, of which mention has before been made,¹ and which caused the destruction of 40,000 souls;² and Las Casas took care to bring this evidence before the Chancellor, who sent him with it to the Bishop.

At last, on the Bishop's recovery, the Junta for the business of the Indies was on the point of being called together, "to-morrow" it may be (Las Casas is speaking of a certain Friday when he is to sup with the Chancellor), when, in the evening of that day, the Chancellor's servants

¹ See vol. i, p. 286.

² "In the meantime the Clerigo received a letter from Seville from Father Reginald, of whom mention was made previously in chapter ninety-eight, informing him that a Franciscan monk named Francisco de Sant Roman had arrived there from Tierra-firme, who declared that he had seen with his own eyes above 40,000 Indians put to the sword or thrown to fierce dogs."—LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxx, p. 387.

tell him that a little page of his, a nephew, who was ill in the house, is dead, at which he appeared very sorrowful. "To-morrow" the Chancellor himself feels ill, and does not go to the palace. There are symptoms of fever. On Monday, however, he is well enough to go to the window of his room. We may imagine with what anxiety Las Casas heard of the illness: it may be that he was the very person who, ever on the watch, perceived the Chancellor at the window. But the fever was not to be baffled: they did not bleed the poor man in time, according to the theory of those days; he died; and on Wednesday he was not even on the face of the earth. "And the Grand Chancellor being dead, of a truth there died, for that time, all hope of a remedy for the Indians."

This, as Las Casas remarks, was the second time,¹ when the "salvation" of those nations (the Indians) seemed assured, and when a reverse occurred, and hope altogether vanished away. So frightfully valuable is the life of a great man in a despotic state: and it may console us, who live under representative governments, for a certain mediocrity and difficulty in the management of public affairs, that at least we are not subject to these dreadful reverses occasioned by the loss of one man. What is gained by us is mostly gained upon the increase of insight in large bodies of men, and will live and augment itself with the advancement of the general thought of the nation.

Upon the Grand Chancellor's death, the Bishop of Burgos instantly regained all his old influence in the government of the Indies; and down went the Clerigo "into the abysses," as he expresses it. Nothing was to be done with the interim-Chancellor, a very phlegmatic Dean,² who praised the Clerigo's unwearied efforts, but could not summon up

¹ I suppose the first time was when, according to LAS CASAS, Ximenes took Indian affairs in hand; but I should name three occasions—1. The appointment of the Junta who made the laws of Burgos. 2. The appointment of Jeronimites. 3. The present one, viz. the appointment by the King of the Chancellor Selvagus and Las Casas to provide a remedy for the Indies.

² The Dean of Besançon.

18 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

energy enough to assist him: "and certainly," to use our historian's own words, "when a man of a choleric temperament, like the Clerigo, and an excessively phlegmatic person, like the good Dean, have to transact business together, it is no slight torment to each of them. However," he slyly adds, "it did not kill the Dean, such was his phlegmatic patience."

At this time, on the Bishop of Burgos's suggestion, an especial Council for Indian affairs was formed.¹ He was appointed president; Hernando de Vega and Zapata, both of whom had connections in the colonies, and who had themselves been deprived of Indians by the first law of Ximenes, were of this Council; Peter Martyr, the historian, was put upon it; also Don Garcia de Padilla, the only person in the Council likely to take up new views. The appointment of such a council was very disheartening to Las Casas, who, nevertheless, like a brave man as he was, went about his work just as if all were smooth before him and shining brightly upon him.

The first act of the Bishop was, to recall the Jeronimite Fathers. Though for some time before this they had possessed no real power (we find that their letters to the authorities in Spain were never answered), yet their presence and their influence must still have been productive of good, and must at least have been felt as a considerable restraint upon evil-doers.² Those, therefore, who cared for the welfare of the Indies, must have been

¹ [Spanish historians themselves are very uncertain about the year in which the Council of the Indies was constituted. Leon Pinelo assigns it to 1520; Pedro Mexia de Ovando to 1523, and he says that Ferdinand proposed forming it in 1510, but was dissuaded by Bishop Fonseca. There is a reference to the Council for the Indies, as already existing, in a document of December 1518 (quoted in the *Relaciones Geograficas de Indias*), but we find Dr. Beltran of the Council of the Indies addressed officially in 1512. (See note, p. 19.) Perhaps the explanation may be that at various times, before the formation of a permanent Council, special matters relating to the Indies were referred to the consideration of Committees temporarily nominated for the purpose, and the title may have been given to them, or used by them, while they existed.]

² [Rodrigo de Figueroa wrote to Charles V., in 1520, that but for the Visitors appointed by the Jeronimites and himself there would not have been 500 Indians left at the end of two years.]

FAILURE OF THE SETTLEMENTS 19

sorry to see the last vestige of the policy of the great Ximenes now altogether effaced from the Indian government.

It has been stated,¹ that, on the Jeronimite Fathers placing the Indians in settlements, the small-pox came among them and carried off numbers. As I said before, I think this cause of the destruction of the Indians (a very convenient one for the conquerors to allege) has been exaggerated. And I am confirmed in this opinion by a letter written by Zuazo, which must have arrived at court about four or five months before this time, in which he says nothing of the small-pox, but assigns as one of the main causes of the decrease of the Indians the frequent change of government that there had been, which led to new *repartimientos*, and to changes of climate and water for the Indians, which were fatal to many of them, as in a number of small things, passed rapidly from hand to hand, even with care, the number is soon diminished.²

Just at this time, when the Bishop of Burgos was carrying it with a high hand in the Council of the Indies, a little gleam of good fortune broke most unexpectedly upon Las Casas and his cause. In all his affairs at court, he had principally been conversant with the late Chancellor, yet some knowledge of the business for which Las Casas worked at court with such indomitable perseverance was doubtless generally circulated amongst the courtiers. Amongst them there was a certain Monsieur de Bure (a young man, as I conjecture), who, it appears, had a desire to make himself acquainted with this business of the Indians. He caused his wish to be made known to the Clerigo: they had a meeting in the palace; and Las Casas

¹ See OVIEDO and HERRERA.

² [Gil Gonzalez Davila, Contador of Española, writing to the King in 1518, gives the same reasons, and adds the prevalence of lawsuits leading to the absence of owners from their estates and neglect of Indians; and "principal reason of all," the sacrifice of the welfare of the Indians and of every other object to the search for gold. The anonymous writer of a report in 1512, to Dr. Beltran of the Council of the Indies (*Col. de Doc. Ind. . . . del Indias*, xxxiv, p. 136), lays weight on the want of Indian women preventing any natural increase, the Spaniards taking them as servants or mistresses.]

20 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

acquainted him fully with the whole state of the case. Monsieur de Bure was much affected by the Clerigo's narration. De Bure was a powerful man, being the nephew of De Laxao,¹ who enjoyed great influence with the King, and who, being the *sommelier du corps*,² slept in the King's room. He was a person celebrated for his wit, and probably on that account his society was exceedingly relished by the grave young King. Monsieur de Bure brought Las Casas to his uncle De Laxao, who also was much interested in the account which Las Casas gave of Indian affairs, and the result was, that he found protectors in these powerful men of the King's household and council.

At this time the Spanish court sent over Rodrigo de Figueroa to take a *residencia* of the auditors of St. Domingo, and of the judges appointed by the Admiral. A certain Doctor de la Gama was appointed to take a *residencia* of the Lieutenant Governor of San Juan, and of Velazquez in Cuba: and Lope de Sosa was sent to succeed Pedrarias as governor of the Tierra-firme, and to take a *residencia* of the same Governor. Information having been given that the inhabitants of Trinidad were cannibals, the King's Council resolved to order war to be made upon them; but Las Casas prevailed upon the Council to insert in the instructions which Figueroa was to take with him, that, as the Clerigo Bartolomé de Las Casas asserted that the natives of Trinidad were not cannibals, Figueroa should, on arriving at St. Domingo, examine carefully into the truth of this statement. He did so, and found that these poor islanders were not cannibals, but very quiet people, as Figueroa himself afterwards bore testimony.

¹ Carlos Puper, Lord of Laxao.

² *Sommelier* was corrupted into *Sumiller* by the Spaniards. The following is the definition of the officer: "A very high officer of the household whose duty it is to assist the King in his dressing-room, in clothing and unclothing him, and in all that appertains to the royal chamber—the chief officer of the King's bedchamber. This title was introduced into Castille by the house of Burgundy."—*Diccionario de la Lengua Castellana por la Academia Española*.

[Perhaps the best English equivalent would be Controller of the Household.—See *Relation of Bernardo Navagiero*, printed in Bradford's *Correspondence of Charles V.*]

What Figueroa and these other authorities accomplished may be seen at another time ; but the cause of the Indies was now to be maintained at the Spanish court ; and Las Casas was the only champion who perseveringly did battle there in its behalf.

At this period the Clerigo received a letter from Pedro de Córdova, in which, after telling of some horrible exploits of the Spaniards in the island of Trinidad, and expressing himself in a way that seems to show he was much dissatisfied with the proceedings of the Jeronimite Fathers, the good prelate of the Dominicans went on to say, that he wished that one hundred leagues on the coast of the Tierra-firme about Cumaná were set apart by the King, to be entered solely by the Franciscan and Dominican monks, for the purpose of preaching the gospel there. His desire was, that no layman might be permitted to enter, so that no hindrance might occur to the good work : and he suggested, that, if Las Casas could not obtain a hundred leagues, he should endeavour to obtain ten ; and that, if he could not get such a tract of land on the Tierra-firme set apart for this purpose, he should try and get some little islands, called the Islands of Alonso, about fifteen or twenty leagues from the coast. The object was, that this land set apart might be a city of refuge for the poor Indians, and a place wherein to teach the gospel to them. Pedro de Córdova added that, if none of these requests should be granted, he would recall the brethren of his Order from those parts, for it was of no use their preaching "when the Indians saw those who called themselves Christians acting in opposition to Christians."

The good Father imagined that Las Casas was very powerful at court, not knowing how things had been changed by the death of the Chancellor, and by the return of the Bishop of Burgos to power. Las Casas, however, did what he could to further the request of Pedro de Córdova, but with no avail, the Bishop of Burgos saying, the King would be well advised indeed to grant a hundred leagues without any profit to himself. Such was the reply, as Las Casas notes, of one of the successors of the apostles, who laid down their lives for

22 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

the sake of conversion. And, as for profit to the King, "no profit did he derive for forty years and more from those hundred leagues, or from eight thousand in addition, except to have them ravaged, desolated, and destroyed." ¹

As nothing could be done at present in the scheme suggested by Pedro de Córdova, Las Casas returned to the prosecution of his own plan, namely, the sending out of labourers to the West India islands. In this he was favoured by Cardinal Adrian and the other Flemings; and he succeeded in obtaining all the provisions and orders that he wanted for that purpose. ² Amongst others, he procured that a certain esquire called Berrio, an Italian, should be appointed by the King, and called the king's captain. He was to accompany Las Casas, to be under his orders, and to give notice by trumpet in the various towns of the purpose which Las Casas came to announce. This man, however, had no intention of really serving under the Clerigo, but he went to the Bishop of Burgos, and secretly got his orders altered from "Do what he shall desire you," to "Do what may seem good to you." ³

The Clerigo with his squire and other attendants set off on his expedition for procuring emigrant labourers. He directed his course from Saragossa towards Castille, assembling the people in the churches and informing them of the benefits and privileges they would acquire by emigrating. Numbers consented to go, inscribing their names in a book. At Berlanga, out of a population of two hundred, more than seventy inscribed their names. It gives a curious insight into those times, to see that the inducement with these people to emigrate, was to get away from the seignorial rights over them. They came to Las Casas with the greatest secrecy; and he

¹ LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxx, p. 397.

² [By royal authorities of the 10th and 20th September 1518. The Crown offered premiums, ranging from ten to thirty thousand *maravedis*, to those among the settlers who first produced various products—silk, cloves, ginger, hemp, rice, etc.]

³ LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxx, p. 400.

relates this speech made by four of them. "Señor, none of us wishes to go to the Indies for want of means here, for each of us has a hundred thousand maravedis of *hacienda* and more, but we go to leave our children in a free land under royal jurisdiction." ¹

As was to be expected, the lords of these places were very hostile to Las Casas; but their opposition was a trifling evil compared to the insubordination of Berrio. This man often requested leave to go to Andalucia, where his wife was. The Clerigo would not allow this; they would come, he said, to Andalucia in good time; they were upon duty now: but no remonstrances sufficed to retain Berrio, who came one day, booted and spurred, to the Clerigo, and asked if he had any orders for Andalucia. Las Casas then learnt for the first time that this Berrio was in fact no servant of his, but free to act for himself: and the man accordingly took his departure in this most wilful fashion. The mischief did not stop here. Berrio went to Andalucia, and, having collected about two hundred vagabonds, tapsters and roysterers and idle people, anything but labourers, went with them to the India House at Seville. The official persons there, having received no orders about them, were in complete perplexity what to do. They shipped them off, however, in two vessels which happened to be on the point of sailing at that time; and the unfortunate rabble of emigrants arrived in this way at St. Domingo. There again the official people had received no orders to provide anything for the emigrants, many of whom died; others crowded into the hospitals; others returned to their former mode of life; and others preyed upon the Indians. Thus ended this miserable expedition; and this ending may justly be attributed to the outrageous conduct of the Bishop of Burgos in altering a despatch, after it had been signed.

Las Casas resolved to return to court. He was now fully assured of the facility of obtaining emigrants, but he did not wish to do any more at present than he had done in the matter, considering the probable opposition of the great lords and the defection of Berrio, and also taking

¹ LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxx, p. 401.

24 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

into account the readiness of the common people to emigrate, which made it only a subject of more urgent concern to consider carefully what was to be done. When the Bishop of Burgos had heard the Clerigo's account of his expedition, in which he told his Lordship that he could answer for procuring not only three thousand but ten thousand labourers, the Bishop said it was "a great matter, a great matter indeed"; but, as usual, nothing came of this speech, only that by repeated and energetic remonstrances Las Casas prevailed upon the Council to send wine and provisions after the poor wretches who had already sailed. These supplies, however, came too late. And so ended this plan for the benefit of the Indies.

With all our aids and appliances of modern times, we, too, find emigration to be no light undertaking—one of the main difficulties being that the emigrants are generally of one class, so that the peculiarities of that one class are liable to be developed to the uttermost, and have to be provided for all at once.

At this time the court removed to Barcelona.¹ A controversy that the Clerigo had there with the Bishop of Burgos about the emigration scheme deserves to be recorded. Las Casas would not in any way further the proposed emigration, without being assured of the emigrants receiving support for a year after their arrival. This was a fundamental part of his plan, and finding that it was not to be conceded, and that other persons were being sought for, to take charge of the emigration, he wrote to the towns which he had previously visited, and warned the people against going. When Las Casas was arguing one day before the Council of the Indies for the allowance of a year's support to be made to the emigrants, the Bishop said that the King would spend more with those labourers, than with an armada of twenty thousand men (the Lord Bishop was much more

¹ [Charles arrived at Barcelona on 15th February 1519, and remained there until 25th January 1520. He arrived at Coruña on the following 4th May, and left for England and Flanders on the 20th.—*Itinerary of Charles V.*]

versed in fitting out armadas than in saying masses), to which Las Casas replied: "It appears then to your Lordship, that after you have been the death of so many Indians, you wish to be the death of Christians also. But it was put in that courteous way" (I do not myself see the courtesy), "though not without sarcasm. I do not know," he adds, "whether the Bishop, who was no fool, took it."

In fine, however, nothing could be made of this obdurate Bishop, and Las Casas, almost glad to be freed from the responsibility of the emigrating scheme, immediately turned his fertile mind to another plan, which he thought might with worldly men appear more feasible.

There was still in his thoughts the original plan of Pedro de Córdova, for enclosing, as it were, a hundred leagues along the coast of the Tierra-firme, and forbidding the entrance of laymen into it. That scheme, however, was liable to the objection of the Bishop of Burgos, that it held out no solid pecuniary advantage to the crown. These two things, profit for the King, and the preaching of the gospel, must therefore be combined; and from this idea came the following ingenious proposition.

I may mention here, in the way of parenthesis, that a new Grand Chancellor, a learned and good man, according to our historian, had come from Flanders. This was Charles the Fifth's celebrated Chancellor, Arborio de Gattinara, a man whose name is found in connection with several of the greatest events of the age in which he lived. He was employed, in 1508, in negotiating the League of Cambray; he was president of the parliament of Burgundy, from which office he was driven by the nobles; he made the speech for his master to the electors of the Empire on the occasion of Charles being chosen Emperor; he opposed in the most resolute manner¹ the adoption of the treaty of Madrid, which set Francis the First at liberty; and even refused to affix

¹ See the Chancellor's speech. — GUICCIARDINI, viii, p. 261. Milano, 1803.

26 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

his signature to that treaty,¹ a formality that belonged to his office; and finally Gattinara is said to have been concerned in settling the celebrated peace of Cambray. Just before his death, in 1529, he was made a cardinal.

His moderation in reference to the Reformation is well known, and coincides with the high esteem which he had for Erasmus.² I imagine him to have been one of the earliest of those professional statesmen, if the phrase may be used, who were afterwards so trustfully employed by Charles the Fifth, and in another generation by Elizabeth of England. Gattinara and Granvella correspond to Burleigh, the elder Bacon, and the other statesmen who stood round the throne of that Queen.

Gattinara favoured Las Casas almost as much as his predecessor in the Chancellor's office, Selvagius, had done. The Clerigo says that the Chancellor loved him much;³ and as Las Casas was only a poor suitor, whose claims for attention were no other than the justice and the goodness of his cause, it is greatly to the credit of this Chancellor that he was always willing to give audience to Las Casas, and that he uniformly defended him. Whether, however, Gattinara had not quite as much influence as Selvagius (and it is certain he was not on such good terms with Chièvres), or whether he himself was won over to a certain extent by the Bishop of Burgos, it is clear that this mischievous prelate had more power now in Indian affairs than he had possessed under the former Chancellor.

¹ See GUICCIARDINI, p. 284.

² "How often his sacred Majesty makes mention of thee! Indeed, being lately with him (he suffering with the gout) he questioned me whether I had any acquaintance with thee, and when I answered that I had, but that it was little, he quickly added, 'Truly you have acquaintance with a most Christian and most learned man, always most dear to me.'—Gattinara to Erasmus. ERASMI, *Epistolæ*; No. 469, Lugd. Bat. 1703.

³ "The Clerigo had recourse to the Flemings, chiefly to Monsieur de Laxao, who was devoted to him, and to the newly come Chancellor, who, when he afterwards thoroughly understood the business and what the Clerigo had at heart, loved him much. When he happened to meet the King either at the Councils, of all of which he was president in virtue of his office, or anywhere, he praised, favoured, and aided the Clerigo, and gave him a great character in all things."—LAS CASAS *Hist. de las Indias*, lxvi, p. 49.

Gattinara, though mixed up with so many great affairs in France, in Germany, in Italy, and in Spain, was never perhaps seen so closely, nor, I imagine, to such advantage, as he will be in the following pages.¹

The new proposition which Las Casas had to bring forward under this new dynasty (for the change of Chancellors was almost a change of dynasty to him), is a very remarkable one. It formed the turning-point of the Clerigo's own life, and in its consequences had the widest influence upon the fortunes of the New World. The substance of it was as follows:—

Las Casas engaged to find fifty Spaniards, which he thought he could do amongst the colonists, moderate and reasonable men, who would undertake the good work he had in hand for them out of Christian motives, at the same time having a fair view to furthering their own interests by lawful means. He limited himself to fifty, because fifty would be more manageable than a greater number, and would be sufficient for peaceful converse with the Indians.

These fifty were to subscribe two hundred ducats each, making ten thousand in the whole, which he thought would be enough to provide the requisite outfit and sustenance for a year, and presents for the Indians.

The fifty were to wear a peculiar dress, white cloth with coloured crosses, like the Knights of Calatrava, but having some additional ornament. Much ridicule was afterwards thrown on this part of the scheme; and the proposed knights obtained the name of *sanbenitos*, in allusion to the dress of heretics worn at an *auto-da-fé*. The object, however, of having a peculiar dress, was to distinguish this band from any Spaniards whom the Indians had seen before. They were also to bring a message to the Indians, of a new tenor, telling them

¹ It is a great peculiarity of the narrative of Las Casas, that, whenever he brings his reader in contact with the great men of his time, he presents them in their homeliest appearance. What has already been told in this history of the great Cardinal Ximenes, will perhaps have made him more familiar to the student of history than any other transaction in which the Cardinal was engaged.

28 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

that they were sent to salute them from the King of Spain, who had heard of the evils and oppressions they (the Indians) had suffered, that they were to give them presents as a sign of amity, and to protect them from the other Spaniards who had done them injury. Las Casas says that he had it in his mind, if God had prospered the work, to get the Pope and the King to allow this body to be formed into a religious fraternity.

For the profit of the King, Las Casas held out the following inducements:—that he would pacify the country assigned to him, which he requested should begin a hundred leagues above Paria¹ and extend down the coast a thousand leagues;² that after being settled

¹ That means a hundred leagues to the eastward of Paria, *i.e.* taking the river Dulce as the eastern limit. "That is from a hundred leagues above Paria, from the river called the Rio Dulce, that we now call the river and country of the Arvacas, down the coast to the extent of a thousand leagues."—LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxvi, p. 40.

² It was ultimately restricted to about two hundred and sixty leagues.

A letter has recently been brought to light, bearing the signature of Las Casas, but without date, which must, however, have been addressed by him to the Grand Chancellor in the course of these negotiations.

It begins by stating that he does not wish to lose more time in a thing which is so manifestly good as this business, and so "practicable," unless, as he adds, the time which is lost here should prevent it (*sino que lo que aquí se pierde de tiempo pudiéndose escusar*).

He mentions that he first asked for a thousand leagues; that when the matter was referred to the Council of the Indies, they reduced it to six hundred, and in those six hundred there were only two provinces, namely, Cenu and Santa Martha, which produced gold, and that these provinces were included in a hundred leagues. He also mentions that he had asked for the pearl fisheries, but that they had been "taken" from him. This, however, he had acceded to, on the condition that those Spaniards who had the permission to go to the pearl fisheries, should be prevented from injuring and scandalizing the Indians. He intimates, that now Cenu is about to be taken from him, and that, if so, it will greatly diminish the inducements which he can hold out to secular persons to join in his enterprize, and aid him with their funds; "for," he adds, "as your Lordship may judge, we shall find few laymen who will be inclined to go and spend their estates, and to die and labour, solely to serve God, to convert souls, and to preach their faith to the infidels" (*porque, como v. s. puede juzgar, pocos seglares hallaríamos que se quieran mover á yr á gastar sus haciendas y á morir y trabajar como dicho es solamente por servir á Dios y convertir animas y predicar su fee á los ynfielles*).

He puts it plainly to the Grand Chancellor, whether Lope de Sosa, who, as the reader will recollect, went out to supersede Pedrarias in

there three years, he would contrive that the King should have fifteen thousand ducats of tribute from the Indians and the Spanish settlements, if there should be any; and that this tribute should increase gradually, until, at the tenth year, and thenceforward, it should amount to seventy thousand ducats.¹

Las Casas, also offered to found three settlements in the course of five years, with a fortress in each of them.

Moreover, he would obtain geographical knowledge about the country assigned to him, and give the King information on that head: and he would do what he could to convert the natives without its being any charge to the King.

The Clerigo on his part demanded, that the King should ask for a brief from the Pope, to allow the

the government of Darien, will not have enough to govern, and his people to destroy, without the province of Cenu:—"There will remain to Lope de Sosa, without the province of Cenu, sufficient territory very rich in gold from Darien to the westward for him to govern and his people to destroy."

After offering many good reasons to the Chancellor for the request being granted, he prays that, at least, the province of Cenu may be divided between himself and Lope de Sosa, or, if that be not possible, that the onerous conditions which he had undertaken for himself and his knights might be diminished accordingly.

The minute of the Chancellor upon the letter is so far favourable, that it directs the last request of Las Casas to be complied with.—"Reduce the conditions relating to taxes and emigrants conformably to the diminution of territory contained in the first clause according as best may be agreed with him; since in this the king has made no order, and it may be advantageous without risk of loss, for experience is to show of what service the plan may prove."

The valuable document from which the above extracts are made, is to be found in a collection of Spanish letters, which are being edited by Mr Henry Stevens, of Vermont, U.S. I cannot omit the opportunity of expressing my cordial thanks to this gentleman for the liberal manner in which he has always aided my researches, both by his great bibliographical knowledge, and by lending me some of the most rare works relating to Spanish America, whenever they have come into his possession.

¹ [Fifteen thousand ducats at the expiration of the first three years, then fifteen thousand ducats a year for the fourth, fifth and sixth years, thirty thousand for each year from the seventh to the tenth, and sixty thousand from the eleventh onwards.—A. M. FABIÉ, *Vida del P. F. Bartolomé de las Casas.*]

30 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

Clerigo to take with him twelve priests, Franciscans and Dominicans, who should come voluntarily: and that His Holiness should give a plenary indulgence to all those who should die on the voyage, or in the act of assisting in the said conversion.

He also demanded that he might take ten Indians from the islands, if they would come with him of their own accord.

He also made it a provision, that all the Indians who had been taken from that part of the Tierra-firme which might be assigned to him, should be placed in his charge for the purpose of being restored to their own country.

We come now to the inducements for the fifty to combine in this enterprize. They were to have the twelfth part of the revenues accruing to the King, and to be enabled to leave this to their heirs for ever.¹

Then they were to be made Knights of the Golden Spur, and to have a grant of arms. Such of them as the Clerigo should appoint were to have the government of the proposed fortresses and of the settlements. There were also many other provisions and exemptions made in their favour (such for instance as their salt being tax-free), which we need not recount.

Each of the fifty might import three negroes—half of the number men, half women,² and hereafter, if it should seem good to the Clerigo, they might have seven more negro slaves each. It is evident, therefore, that at this time Las Casas had not discovered his error with regard to the negroes.

On behalf of the Indians, Las Casas demanded that the King should give assurance that, neither at this present nor at any future time, should the Indians within the limits agreed upon, being in due obedience and tributary, be given to the Spaniards in *encomiendas*, or in slavery of any kind.

¹ This was granted only for four descents.

² Rather a difficult matter; but I suppose it means that the total number brought over should consist of an equal number of males and females.

There was to be a treasurer, a contador, and a judge.

Also, as a false relation of what should take place in these territories might be carried to the King, the King was to promise, that on no account would he make any change in the order of things, as regarded this colony, without first hearing from the treasurer and the contador.

Several other matters of detail were provided for; but the above is an outline of the most important portions of this proposal made by Las Casas. Like anything of long extent and large bearings, it presents certain points of attack; but, upon the whole, if sufficient power were given to the head of the colony, it was likely to work well. The plan may remind the reader of feudal times, and of an abbot with a large domain and a retinue of knights to do his bidding. Those abbacies, probably, did not work ill for the poor in their neighbourhood.

The great scheme being now ready, in which it may be observed that Las Casas asked nothing for himself, he explained it to the Grand Chancellor and the other Flemings, who received it favourably, and desired him to lay it before the Council of the Indies. There it was very ill received by the unflagging enemy of Las Casas, the Bishop of Burgos, and by the rest of the councillors. Still they did not utterly reject it, but sought by delay to put it aside. At this time the Grand Chancellor and Chièvres were obliged to go to the borders of France, to treat of peace with the French king. Las Casas urged the settlement of his business; and, on mentioning to the Flemings that he would have to leave the court on account of his poverty, Monsieur de Bure and a relation of his advanced the Clerigo money, for fear he should have to leave while the Chancellor was absent. The favour of Las Casas with the Flemings on the King's arrival in Spain has been attributed to a wish to oppose the policy of Ximenes and the Spanish councillors. These gifts to Las Casas cannot be accounted for on this supposition. He says that these men had no interest to serve; and there is every reason to believe, that they acted from a regard for the man and a belief

32 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

in the goodness of his cause. The Chancellor and Chièvres returned; but still Las Casas could make no way in the Council of the Indies. Not daunted, however, his fertile genius and amazing vigour stirred up new means for furthering his cause, and there is thus brought before us one of the most interesting episodes in the whole of this narrative.

It has been a common practice at courts, to have certain set preachers. For the Spanish court at this time there were eight preachers to the King: and Las Casas bethought himself of laying his troubles and the wrongs of the Indians before these ecclesiastics, and beseeching their favour and assistance. I will here give their names, as I think we ought not to grudge naming men, who, though they come but once or twice before us, and speak but a few words in the great drama of history, do so in a way that ought to confer reputation upon them. First, then, there were the brothers Coronel, Maestro Luis and Maestro Antonio, both very learned men, doctors of the University of Paris; then there was Miguel de Salamanca, also a doctor of the same university, and a master in theology, afterwards Bishop of Cuba; then Doctor de la Fuente, a celebrated man in the time of the late Cardinal Ximenes, of his University of Alcalá; then brother Alonso de Leon, of the Franciscan Order, very learned in theology; brother Dionysius, of the Order of St. Augustin, "a great preacher and very copious in eloquence": the names of the other two Las Casas had forgotten.

The king's preachers and Las Casas formed a Junta of their own. They admitted one or two other *religiosos* into it, a brother, as it was said, of the Queen of Scotland,¹

¹ "At this time (1516 or early in 1517) there arrived fourteen monks of the order of St. Francis, all foreigners from Picardy, and very devout, learned, and well-known men, zealous to be employed in the conversion of these races. Among them came a brother of the Queen of Scotland (so it was said), a man of great merit, old, and wise in counsel; and all of them men of ripe age, and some of them in appearance such as we could imagine Roman Senators to have looked like."—LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxxv, p. 343.

[The possible Queens of Scotland were Mary, daughter of the Duke

KING'S PREACHERS HELP LAS CASAS 33

being one of them. This last mentioned noble monk was one of those who had come over from Picardy in the year 1516 or 1517; and who himself had gained experience of the proceedings of the Spaniards on the coast of Cumaná. The bold Scot wished to propose to the Junta a large question of the most searching and fundamental nature, namely, "With what justice or right an entrance could be made into the Indies after the manner which the Spaniards adopted in entering those countries."¹

Each day the Junta thus constituted met at the monastery of Santa Catalina, and were, as the historian describes, a sort of antagonist Council to that held daily on Indian affairs under the auspices of the Bishop of Burgos. They met at the same hour as the Indian Council, perhaps the better to evade observation, for I imagine their proceedings were kept quite secret.

The conclusion this Junta came to, was, that they were obliged by the Divine Law to undertake to procure a remedy for the evils of the Indies: and they bound themselves to each other by oath, that none of them were to be dismayed or to desist from the undertaking until it should be accomplished.

They resolved to begin by "the evangelical form of fraternal correction." First, they would go and admonish the Council of the Indies; if this had no effect, they would then admonish the Chancellor; if he were obdurate they would admonish Monsieur Chièvres; and, if none of these admonitions addressed to the officers of the crown were of any avail, they would finally go to the King and admonish him.

If all these earthly powers turned a deaf ear to fraternal admonitions, they, the brethren, would then preach publicly

of Guelders, wife of James II. (1437-1460); Margaret, daughter of Christian I., King of Denmark, wife of James III. (1460-1488); and Margaret, daughter of Henry VII. of England, wife of James IV. (1488-1513). The monk was no brother of Margaret Tudor; Margaret of Denmark had two brothers who became kings, and two others who died in boyhood. Therefore, if there is any truth in the story, he must have been a brother of Queen Mary of Guelders, and to make that possible we must suppose him to have been a child when she was a grown woman.]

¹ LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxvi, p. 51.

34 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

against all of these great men, not omitting to give his due share of blame to the King himself.¹

This resolution, drawn up in writing, they subscribed to; and they swore upon the cross and the gospels to carry out their resolve.

¹ "In that case they would preach publicly against all of them, giving the King his share of the blame."—LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxvi, p. 52.

CHAPTER II

LAS CASAS SUCCEEDS IN OBTAINING A GRANT OF LAND ON THE PEARL COAST

ALL combinations of human endeavour have their intense periods of life, as individual men have theirs; and each generation of mankind is surrounded by forms of thought, and by institutions embodying such forms, which are in every variety of growth or decay. It is always cheering to see any such institutions in the full vigour of action and purpose, or at least before they have degenerated into mere forms, in which state, however, like the dead boughs on trees, they will remain almost an indefinite period of time.

The king's preachers, whose boldness in combining for good has been shown in the preceding chapter, were part of an institution which had evidently much vitality remaining in it.

We left these preachers thoroughly intent upon their work of admonition, which they immediately began to put in practice in the following manner.

On a certain day, entering the Council of the Indies suddenly, to the great astonishment of the Bishop of Burgos and the rest of the Council, the preachers requested leave to speak, and brother Miguel de Salamanca, the eldest of them, made an earnest and explicit speech, in which he said, that he and his brethren were aware of the cruelties and wrongs that had been committed in the Indies, by which the Christian religion was defamed; and that the Indies were being depopulated, to the disgrace of the crown, "for," as the Scripture says, "in the multitude of the people consists the dignity and honour of the King."¹ Then, after saying that the preachers wondered

"In multitudine populi dignitas regis: et in paucitate plebis ignominia principis."—*Lib. Proverbiorum*, cap. 14.

36 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

how such things had happened in the Indies, considering the prudence and merits of the Council, he added that they knew not where to lay the blame, except upon the persons who had been charged with the government of those parts for many years. Then he alleged that the office of the preachers in the court was such as to make it incumbent upon them to impugn anything that might be contrary to the Divine Majesty; wherefore they had come to inquire how such evils had been permitted without a remedy having been provided for them, and to see how some remedy might now be provided. Finally, declaring that divine reward would attend upon the Council if they did provide a remedy, and punishment if they did not, he concluded with an apology for the appearance in the council-room of himself and his brethren.

Up rose the Bishop of Burgos, and with all the majestic pride of an ancient priest, "as if they had come in the times of the Gentiles to pull down the temple of Apollo," thus replied: "Great is your presumption and audacity to come and correct the Council of the King. Casas is at the bottom of this business. Who gave the king's preachers authority to meddle in the matters of government, which the King transacts through his Councils? The King does not give you your bread for that, but for you to preach the gospel to him."

Hereupon Doctor de la Fuente replied: "In this business Casas is not concerned, but the *casa* (house) of God, whose servants we are, and in whose defence we are bound, and are ready, to lay down our lives. Does it appear to your Lordship to be presumption, that eight masters of theology, who might go and exhort a whole Council-General in things pertaining to the Faith and to the government of the Universal Church, should come and exhort the king's Council? We have power to come and admonish the Councils of the King in respect of what they may do wrong, for it is our office to be of the Council of the King. And for this we have come here, my Lords—namely, to exhort you, and to require that you amend the great errors and injustice that are committed in the Indies, to the

perdition of so many souls and with such offence to God; and, unless you do amend these things, my Lords, we shall preach against you as against those who do not keep God's laws, and who do that which is not convenient for the service of the King. And this, my Lords, is to preach the gospel and to fulfil it."

Doctor de la Fuente, of Alcalá, seems to have imbibed some of the force and directness of the great founder of his University, the late Cardinal Ximenes. The Council were astounded at the Doctor's bold words, and began to soften down a little. Don Garcia de Padilla, now taking up the controversy, said, "This Council does its duty, and has made many very good provisions for the benefit of the Indies, which shall be shown to you, although your presumption does not deserve it, that you may see how great is your rashness and pride."

To this Doctor de la Fuente replied. "My Lords, you have but to show us these provisions, and if they should be good and just, we shall admit them to be so; but if bad and unjust, we shall give to the Devil them and whosoever would sustain and not amend them; and we do not believe that your Lordships will be amongst those persons."

Finally, after smoother talk on the part of the Council, and probably with a little more mildness on the other side, it was concluded that the preachers should come the next day, and hear the provisions which had been made for the benefit of the Indies.

Accordingly they did come, and heard the numerous provisions read, which from the earliest times of the Catholic Sovereigns downwards, had been made on this subject, but which, unhappily, had been carried into execution by persons of a very different temper of mind from that of the statesmen, philanthropists, and monarchs who had been concerned in issuing the various ordinances. When the preachers had heard these official documents read, they asked for time to deliver their opinion in writing. This opinion comes handed down to us not by speech put into their mouths on the part of some imaginative historian, nor does it merely rest on the Clerigo's recollection; but, when

38 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

he wrote his history, he had before him the copy of the preachers' opinion in the handwriting of brother Miguel, who was the secretary to this clerical Junta.

The document differs in some considerable respects from the opinions of Las Casas, which shows that the preachers exercised an independent judgment. They commence with a graceful and modest exordium, in which they recount the mode of their interference in this matter, praise the laws that had been read to them on their second attendance at the Council, but at the same time intimate their opinion of the insufficiency of these laws. Their Lordships, they add, are not to wonder if a remedy for the evil should come to them from without ("from an alien hand"), seeing that Moses, highly favoured of God as he was, yet received counsel of an idolater touching the government of the Israelites, and that St. Peter had need of the eloquence of Apollos, and of consultation with the rest of the apostolic body.

Then they declare, that, though far from arrogating for themselves, that they are the persons chosen by God to instruct the Council, yet that they are, as it were, the eyes of the court; that, while their Lordships are spiritually asleep "in the depths of temporal business," they (the preachers) are, or as they delicately phrase it, should be, studying the law of God, in order to expound it to the court: and they add significantly, that, if they had done their duty, perhaps there would not have been so much corruption in many things as there is.

They then proceed to the business in hand; and, admitting that the laws which were read to them were excellent laws, provided there was to be such a thing as a *repartimiento*, and provided the laws in question could be executed, which they thought could never be, they come at once to the root of the matter, and pronounce that the cause of all the evil in the Indies is the system of giving the Indians in *repartimiento*. It is contrary, they say, to worldly prudence, to the service of the King, to civil and canonical law, to the rules of moral philosophy and theology, and to the will of God and of His Church.

CONDEMN *REPARTIMIENTOS* 39

While such a thing exists, they ask, can the evils of those colonies be repaired by any laws that may be made?

They then go into proof upon all the points they have raised against the system of giving Indians in *repartimiento*. Upon the first point, namely, of this practice being contrary to worldly prudence, they adduce the following argument well worthy of attention. This system, they say, prevents the existence of a State, "which, according to all those who have written of it, consists in diversity of conditions and offices." Who ever heard, they ask, of a great digging republic (*republica cavadora*) in which there are no soldiers, philosophers, lawyers, official men, or other kind of labourers than those who dig?

They afterwards go into the civil and political branch of the argument, and utterly contravene the notion that this system of *repartimientos* is consistent with freedom. What king, who ever lived, they ask, compelled his people to work more than nine months of the year for him or for others? Upon this branch of the argument they lay much stress, and they say, "We hold (would to God it may not be so) that this most great sin (the system of *repartimientos* or *encomiendas*) will be the cause of the total destruction of the State of Spain, if God does not alter it, or we do not amend it ourselves."

The preachers then fairly demolish the supposition that visitors can correct abuses. Why, if these visitors were angels, and neither ate, nor slept, nor received gifts, they would not check abuses which the fears of the Indians themselves would always throw a cloak over; and who are these visitors?—persons looking upon the masters, whose doings they come to inspect, as men, perhaps as friends and benefactors, but upon the Indians as beasts.

The preachers then enter upon most dangerous ground, as we should conceive it, only that there was a great deal more freedom of speech in those days than we are apt to imagine. They contend that *repartimientos* are an injury to the King because they destroy his title; and they lay down the doctrine, that a king's title depends upon his rendering service to his people, or being chosen by them.¹

¹ "It remains clear, then, that the lordship and possession of the

40 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

Now the establishment of these *repartimientos* is not a service to the Indian people, and therefore the king has no title to be their sovereign on the ground of service rendered to them: no one can say that the Indians have chosen him for their sovereign; and, therefore, where is the king's title?

Many other arguments against the system of *repartimientos* were brought forward in this protest of the preachers, which need not be recounted here. After summing up, finally, against the system, the preachers proposed their own scheme of government. It was, that the Indians should be formed into settlements consisting of two hundred inhabitants each, and that a Spanish governor should be set over each settlement, whose business it should be to instruct his little community in the peaceful arts of life. He should receive a salary out of the proceeds of the labour of the Indians, but it should be a fixed sum, in order that he might have no inducement of personal interest to overwork the Indians. This governor or majordomo, for that name would better describe his office, should arrange the times for the Indians to go to the mines. Of the gold that they might get, a fifth part should go to the King; and on the produce that they might raise from their farms and sell there should be an excise. The rest of the gold and the produce should be left in the hands of the majordomo, who should account for it to certain visitors. He should take his salary out of it; and what remained, after providing for the sustenance of the settlement for a year, for tools, and for hammocks, should belong to the Indians, and be spent for them in building cottages, in providing furniture and other useful things: so that in course of time they might learn to have a desire for property, "for this must be the beginning of their polity."

The preachers, speaking of the good to arise from these regulations, say that the Indians will thus become

King our master depends either upon the welfare and increase procured for that state according to the meaning of the apostolic concession, or upon the choice of those peoples."—LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxvi, p. 66.

"a noble and civilized race" (*gente noble y politica*), as other people, the Spaniards, the Germans, and the English have become, who perhaps, were formerly as barbarous, or more so, than these Indians; and who, in former days, as Trogius Pompeius mentions, for want of wine being cultivated by them, drank beer only—a state of things, by the way, which some of them have not yet escaped from.

Emigration, also, they contend will take place from Spain; for many persons who are here superfluous (*que acá sobran*) will take courage to go to the Indies and live there. If they were superfluous, Spain must have been very different from what it is now. It is consolatory, however, to find that nonsense, or at least very incomplete sense, was talked upon this subject more than three centuries ago.

Lastly, the preachers say, that if their plan be put in action, these Indian islands may become "one of the important things in the world," even as regards temporal interests; whereas, if no remedy is found for them, they will become vast deserts. Then, commending their suggestions to the wisdom of the Council of the Indies, the preachers bring their discourse to an end.

The Council received the paper with courtesy, and even with somewhat of approbation. To me it seems, as it did to Las Casas, that the scheme of the preachers for the regeneration of the Indies laboured under a great, if not a vital objection, in allowing too much work at the mines. But, on the whole, it is a very remarkable state paper; sagacious, humane, and bold.

The Council of the Indies seems by quiet demeanour to have absorbed the opposition of the preachers; and these good men, thinking that they had produced the proper impression upon the minds of the statesmen, left the matter in their hands, considering themselves to have fulfilled their vow. As a body of men acting together, they are no more heard of in this history. Still we must not conclude that their labours and their boldness went for nothing. The river that carries civilization through a country, and creates a metropolis, is fed by many streams whose names and waters are lost in it; and in like manner,

42 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

many are the unnoticed currents of thought and endeavour which go to form the main volume of wise legislation.

The indefatigable Las Casas, having little hope of any good from the remonstrance of the preachers, pressed on with vigour his own scheme of colonization. The Bishop of Burgos and the Council of the Indies with equal vigour resisted it. The Clerigo, backed by many of the Flemings, and, as he intimates, having access to the young King and being favourably received by him, took up a position of attack in reference to the Council of the Indies, and inveighed against its proceedings with his usual boldness. The end of this contest was, that the King, with the advice of the Chancellor, appointed a special Council to judge between Las Casas and the Council of the Indies in the matter at issue between them, Las Casas being permitted to name some of the members of this judicial Council. The Bishop of Burgos, when summoned to attend this Council, evaded the summons pleading indisposition: but, on another occasion, being summoned in general terms to a council, and supposing it to be a council of war, or state, he came readily enough, and was dismayed to find that Indian affairs and the business of Las Casas were the questions to be discussed.

Being heard before this judicial Council, Las Casas succeeded in carrying his point: it was resolved that the land which he sought for should be conceded to him; and his success went so far that the official papers were put in course of preparation. The Clerigo thought now, that his business at court was really ended. But the Bishop had another arrow in his quiver. Oviedo, the historian, had just come over from the Indies; and he and two others offered to take the land that Las Casas asked for, agreeing to pay a much higher sum to the King. It is curious to look back and see these two men, who were to be the most celebrated historians of the Indies, bidding against each other for the land to found a colony there; but in those days men of letters were men of action, as perhaps they would be in any time, if they were not supposed to be unfitted for it.

The Council, which I have described as the judicial

Council, was summoned to hear this new proposition. Las Casas spoke out very boldly before it; and, in the course of the proceedings, Antonio de Fonseca, the brother of the Bishop of Burgos, a man of great authority, thus addressed Las Casas, interrupting him probably in the midst of some statement: "You cannot now say that the members of the Indian Council have been the death of the Indians, for you have taken all their Indians away." He alluded to the order issued by Ximenes, that the Indians should be taken away from absentee proprietors, amongst whom were members of the Council. Las Casas replied, "My Lord, their Lordships have not been the death of all the Indians, but they have been the death of immense numbers where they possessed them: the principal destruction, however, of the Indians has been effected by private persons, which destruction their Lordships have abetted."

The Bishop in a furious manner then broke into the discussion with these words: "A fortunate man, indeed, is he who is of the Council of the King, if, being of the Council of the King, he is to put himself in contest with Casas." To this unmannerly speech the Clerigo replied with much readiness and dignity: "A more fortunate man is Casas, if, having come from the Indies two thousand leagues, encountering such risks and dangers, to advise the King and his Council, in order that they might not lose their souls (*que no se vayan a los Infernos*) on account of the tyranny and destruction which is going on in the Indies, in place of being thanked and honoured for it, he should have to put himself in contest with the Council."

At the end of the proceedings the votes were taken, and were found to be in favour of Las Casas. Still, the Council of the Indies, not likely to be much softened by the way in which he had spoken out before the great Council on this last occasion, continued to make resistance. Here we miss the late Cardinal, who would never have allowed for a day these mean endeavours to undermine a great undertaking. As a new device, the Council of the Indies drew up and presented to the Chancellor a memorial against the proposed grant being made to Las Casas, consisting of thirty articles, most of them of a very

44 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

absurd character. Amongst them were such allegations as these :—that Las Casas, being a Clerigo, was not under the king's jurisdiction ; and that he would league with the Genoese and Venetians, and make off to foreign countries with plunder. In their last article the Council alleged, that they had many other reasons which were secret, but which they would tell His Highness (for the memorial was addressed to the King), when he should be pleased to hear them.¹

The memorial was laid before the great Council ; and the result was, that the Chancellor, upon coming out of it, said to Las Casas, that he must give an answer to this document. The difficulty then arose of getting the memorial, for the Council of the Indies made frivolous excuses for withholding it. Months were wasted about this trumpery affair, which may give us some notion of the perseverance and endurance of the Protector of the Indians. At last the Chancellor got the memorial into his hands. He then invited Las Casas to dinner, and afterwards, taking out of his *escritoire* a large bundle of papers, he said to the Clerigo, "Answer now to these things they say against you." Las Casas replied, that the Council of the Indies had been months preparing this accusation, "and I have to answer them in a *credo*. Give me the papers for as many hours as they had months, and your Lordship shall see that I will answer them." The Chancellor said, that he could not part with the papers, as he had promised he would not let them go out of his possession, but Las Casas might answer them there. So, of an evening, while the Chancellor was at his work, the Clerigo came, and sat in a corner of the room, and drew up his reply. Chancellors, even in those

¹ [In his reply Las Casas proffered the Marqués de Aguilar de Campo as security for him to the amount of 30,000 ducats. But the most interesting answer is that in which he contemptuously compares any possible loss that he could cause the royal revenue with that due to the normal action of the crown officials. He points out that the cost of despatching Pedrarias in 1514 was some 54,000 ducats, that between that year and 1519 a million of gold (say £300,000, or £3,000,000 now) had been taken from the Indians, but that only 3000 castellanos (see vol. i, p. 357, note 2) had been sent over to the King in that time.]

days, seem to have been greatly overworked ; but, indeed, this has always been the case, that the work of the world, of all kinds, gets into knots, as it were ; and one man is often left to do the work of six men, who, with infinite dissatisfaction to themselves, are looking on and noting how ill the work is done. At eleven o'clock, a collation was always brought in ; at twelve, the Clerigo took his leave, and went home to his *posada*, not without some fear of what might happen to him on the way from such powerful enemies as were ranged against him. In four evenings Las Casas had prepared his reply.

The Chancellor then summoned a council, and laid the reply before them. It seems to have been successful, for all the Bishop of Burgos could say against it was, "The preachers of the King have made these answers for him." This, of course, the Chancellor knew to be false. He reported to the King the whole course of the proceedings ; and His Highness ordered that Micer Bartolomé should have the grant, and that no notice should be taken of the offers of those who wished to outbid him.

The reader will think that he has now accompanied the Clerigo to a triumphant conclusion of his present business at court ; but, before he left, he was destined to have what he calls "a terrible combat" ; and, as it will bring the young King into presence, upon whose disposition and knowledge of Indian affairs so much depended, it will be well to give an account of this combat.

Just at this time it happened that the Bishop of Darien came to court—upon what business will hereafter appear from a statement of his own. The court was still at Barcelona, but, on account of a pestilence that prevailed there, the King was lodged at a place called "Molins de Rey," three leagues from the town ; and the great Lords occupied houses in the suburbs. Las Casas, seeing the Bishop of Darien for the first time, in the king's apartments, asked what prelate that was. They told him, "The Bishop of the Indies." Las Casas went up to him, and said, "My Lord, as I am concerned in the Indies, it is my duty to kiss the hands of your Lordship."

46 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

The Bishop asked who it was that addressed him, and, being informed, rudely replied, "O, Señor Casas! and what sermon have you to preach to us?"

Las Casas, who was never daunted by bishop or councillor, answered at once, "There was a time, my Lord, when I desired to hear you preach" (the Bishop had been king's preacher in former days), "but I now declare to your Lordship, that I have two sermons ready for you, which, if you please to hear and well consider them, may be worth more than all the money that you bring from the Indies." "You have lost your senses; you have lost your senses," said the Bishop. An acquaintance of the Bishop said to his Lordship, "All these Lords approve of Señor Casas, and his intentions." The Bishop replied, "With good intentions he may do a thing which shall be mortal sin." At this moment, when the Clerigo, once engaged in controversy, would doubtless have uttered some severe and angry speech, the doors of the council chamber, where the King was, opened, and the Bishop of Badajoz came out, for whom the other Bishop was waiting, as he was to dine with him.

Now the Bishop of Badajoz,¹ who was in great credit with the King, had always favoured the Clerigo; and Las Casas, fearing that the Bishop of Darien might injure him with his brother Bishop, resolved to go to his house that day. He went there when the company had finished their dinner, and found the Bishop of Badajoz playing at backgammon (*a las tablas*) with the Admiral Don Diego Columbus, the Bishop recreating

¹ The Bishop of Badajoz does not come before the reader for the first time at this point of the history. He was the Bernardo de Mesa, one of the king's preachers, who was referred to at the making of the laws of Burgos, and who pronounced a qualified opinion in favour of *encomiendas*. It will be recollected that he thought it would be a great difficulty to teach good customs to the Indians, for, as an insular people (the Tierra-firme had not then been discovered), they naturally, he said, have less constancy, "by reason of the moon being the mistress of the waters."—See vol. i, p. 184.

It was afterwards the Bishop's fate to become closely acquainted with another insular people, for he was sent as Ambassador to England, where, as it was in Henry the Eighth's time, his theory about the inconstancy of insular people was probably confirmed.

himself until it was the hour to return to the king's lodgings again. There was a knot of bystanders looking on at the game, and one of them happened to say to the Bishop of Darien, that wheat was grown in Hispaniola. The Bishop said that it was not possible. Now Las Casas happened to have in his purse some grains of wheat which had been grown under an orange tree in the garden of the Dominican Monastery of St. Domingo; and so, after controverting most respectfully the assertion of the Bishop, he produced the wheat. The Bishop replied with fierceness, and then launched into a general attack of the rudest kind upon Las Casas, declaring his unfitness for the business he had come to court upon. Great ecclesiastics have mostly been well-disposed and well-spoken men; but, when there has arisen an insolent one, his ill-breeding has always, I imagine, far outgone that of other men. The fervid Las Casas was not behindhand in the war of words, and told the Bishop that he drank the blood of his own flock and that unless he returned to the last farthing all the money he had brought over, he was no more likely to be saved than Judas Iscariot. The Bishop endeavoured to laugh down these violent sayings. The Clerigo told him he ought to weep rather than to laugh. At last the Bishop of Badajoz, using the authority of a host, interfered, saying, "No more, no more"; and after the Admiral and another great Lord had said some words in favour of Las Casas, the Clerigo retired.

The Bishop of Badajoz, when he saw the King in the afternoon, told him of what had taken place between the Bishop of Darien and the Clerigo, saying that His Highness would have been amused to hear what Micer Bartholomé said to the Bishop. I have but little doubt that there was supposed to be some truth in the hard sayings of the Clerigo. The King resolved to hear what they both had to say, and for that purpose fixed an hour of audience three days from that time. The Admiral of the Indies, as the matter concerned him, was requested to be present; and, as it happened that a Franciscan brother from Hispaniola had just arrived at court, he also was ordered by the King to attend this audience.

48 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

The day came: the King took his seat on the throne, a few of his greatest councillors being ranged around him on benches below. The order of the proceedings was as follows. The Chancellor and the Lord of Croy ascended the *dais* where the King was seated, and on their knees conferred with him and received his commands. Then, when they had returned to their places, the Chancellor gave utterance to these commands:—"Reverend Bishop, His Majesty" (Charles had just been elected Emperor, and was therefore styled Majesty) "commands you to speak, if you have anything to say touching the Indies."

The Bishop of Darien then rose, and made, as Las Casas admits, an elegant exordium, saying how he had long desired to see that Royal presence, and that now, God having complied with his desire, he knew that the face of Priam was worthy of his kingdom. Having finished this exordium, the Bishop went on to say, that he had come from the Indies, and had secret matters of much importance to communicate, which had better be told to His Majesty and the Council only, wherefore he begged that those who were not of the Council, might be ordered to depart. The King desired, through the Chancellor, that the Bishop should say there and then whatever he had to say. Part of the Bishop's speech is so remarkable, that it is better to give that in his own words.

"Very powerful Sir, the Catholic King your grandfather (may he be in glory!) determined to make an armada to go and people the Tierra-firme of the Indies, and he begged our very holy Father to create me Bishop of that new settlement; and, not counting the time passed in going and returning, I have been five years there, and, as we were much people and took with us no more provisions than were necessary for the journey, the greatest part died of hunger, and we who remained, in order not to die as those did, have all this time done no other thing than rob and kill and eat. Seeing, then, that the land was going to destruction, and that the first Governor¹ was bad, and the second² much worse, and that Your Majesty had in a happy hour arrived in these kingdoms,

¹ Vasco Nuñez.

² Pedrarias.

I determined to come and give You intelligence of this, as to my Lord and King." Touching the Indians, the Bishop said, that from what he had seen of them, both in his own diocese, and on his journey, his opinion was that they were by nature slaves.

Las Casas was now commanded to speak. It will be needless, however, to recount his speech, as his thoughts on these subjects, and the principal facts which he enumerated, have already been stated in various parts of this narrative. It appears that the Bishop of Darien, in the course of his argument, had quoted Plato, to which the Clerigo, I am sorry to say, made this reply: "Plato was a Gentile, and is now burning in Hell, and we are only to make use of his doctrine as far as it is consistent with our holy Faith and Christian customs."

Though the speech of the Clerigo need not be reported in full, one declaration that he made must not be omitted, in which he told the King, that he had not taken up his vocation to please him, but to please God, and in proof of this bold assertion, went on to say, "I renounce whatever temporal honour or reward Your Majesty may wish to confer upon me."¹

Las Casas having finished, the Franciscan Father was ordered to speak. "My Lord," he said, "I have been certain years in the island of Hispaniola, and I was commanded with others to go and visit and take the number of Indians in the island, and we found that they were so many thousand. Afterwards, at the end of two years, a similar charge was again given to me, and we found that there had perished so many thousand. And thus the infinity of people who were in that island had been destroyed. Now, if the blood of one person unjustly put to death was of such effect that it was not removed

¹ Indeed, he went so far as to say that, with all respect for so great a King, he would not go from where he stood to the corner of the room, merely to serve His Majesty, unless it were to perform his duty as a subject, and unless he thought that it were consistent with the will of God to do so.—"It is certain (speaking with all the respect and reverence due to so great a King) that I would not move from here to that corner to serve Your Majesty save for the duty I owe as a subject, and unless I thought and believed it to be in accordance with the will of God."—LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxvi, p. 133.

50 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

out of the sight of God until he had taken vengeance for it, and the blood of the others never ceases to exclaim '*Vindica sanguinem nostrum, Deus noster,*' what will the blood do of such innumerable people as have perished in those lands under such great tyranny and injustice? Then, by the blood of Jesus Christ and by the wounds¹ of St. Francis, I pray and entreat Your Majesty, that you would find a remedy for such wickedness and such destruction of people, as perish daily there, so that the divine justice may not pour out its severe indignation upon all of us."

It was a short speech, but uttered with such fervour, that it seemed to Las Casas as if all the persons there present were already listening to words pronounced in the Day of Judgment.

The Admiral was then requested to speak. He spoke prudently, acknowledging the evils, bearing witness as to what the *religiosos* had done in denouncing these evils, and praying also on his part for a remedy.

Upon the Admiral's ceasing to speak, the Bishop of Darien asked for leave to reply, but he was desired to deliver in writing what more he had to say. The King then rose, and retired into his room, and the audience was ended. It may be hoped that the young Emperor, who, we are told, was unmoved by his new title,² but who had now begun to reign for himself,³ found much to ponder over, from this his first audience in the affairs of the Indies.

It may be as well to mention here, that the Bishop of Darien did submit his information and his opinions about the Indies in writing, that his memorials were very much in accordance with the statements that Las Casas had already made, and that the Bishop, when asked his opinion respecting the Clerigo's plan, approved

¹ The *stigmata*.

² "Nothing to obtain has the King, now Cæsar, having humanly all that fortune can give. Such is his greatness and nobility of mind that having the world under foot he is not perceived to make any shew of it."—PETER MARTYR, *Epist.* 648.

³ "Because, as the King at that time commenced to reign, the Councils were frequent."—LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxxvi, p. 127.

of it, to the great delight, as Las Casas tells us, of the Chancellor and Laxao, as men who loved to favour a good design, and had no mean ends of their own. It may be remarked that Peter Martyr, who is always sufficiently severe upon the Flemings, finds much to praise in this Chancellor.

At this time the Jeronimite Fathers came to court, on their return from Hispaniola; but, not being able to obtain an audience of the King, they retired to their monasteries, and, I believe, were no more heard of in the government of the Indies.¹

The King went to Coruña, in order to embark there, and to proceed to Germany for the purpose of being made Emperor with the due formalities. Some of the Spaniards looked upon the election of Charles to the Empire as no gain to them, and said, that under the fine name of Empire, the fate of Spain would be that of a wretched province.² "What is the Emperor's title" writes Peter Martyr to Charles's Chancellor, "but the shade of the highest tree." If the Indians could have

¹ [Las Casas triumphantly records their successive failures to obtain an audience at Barcelona, Burgos, and Tordesillas, and attributes "it all to the judgment of God" as they had done so little for the Indians. However, the Jeronimites had done their best according to the light vouchsafed to them, and, among other things, endeavoured to encourage the sugar industry in the hope of saving the Indians and retaining the Spanish settlers. In this work they were succeeded by the Licentiate Enciso and Figueroa, the latter of whom wrote to Charles V., in 1520, that the sugar mills were increasing greatly in number. An anonymous *Decadas . . . de las Indias* says that the first sugar canes were brought to Española from the Canaries in 1506, by a man named Aquilon. The experiment succeeded so well that in a short time forty horse and water-power mills were working in the island, the first mill built being in Luguete and belonging to Christobal and Francisco de Tapia.]

² "Spain that was free and enjoyed its franchises, uneasy lest under the title of the Empire it should become a wretched province."—PETER MARTYR, *Epist.* 661.

[Charles was elected to the Imperial crown in June 1519, and there is probably some relation between the election and a declaration of 14th September, following that the Indies were the gift of Rome to the crown of Castille, and "can never be separated from it, diminished, or divided, in part or whole . . . we promise and give our royal word for us and the Kings our successors."—*Recopilacion de Leyes . . . de las Indias.*]

52 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

been consulted in the matter, they would have found much more to regret in it than the Spaniards did; and they might well have likened the shadow of this tree to that of the deadly upas. For the fate of a colony under a preoccupied government at home is in some respects worse even than when it is under a feeble government.

However, at this particular moment, the Indians have not much to complain of, as the last seven days before the King embarked were given to the business of the Indies. In one of the Councils held on this occasion, the Cardinal Adrian (the former colleague of Ximenes) made a great speech in favour of the liberty of the Indians; and it was resolved that they ought to be free, and should be treated as free men. The grant to Las Casas was also concluded, and the King signed the necessary deed on the 19th of May 1520. On the 20th¹ he embarked for Flanders. It was during this voyage that he landed at Dover; and his object in making this visit was to prevent, if possible, the injury which he, or his councillors, foresaw might arise to his affairs from the impending meeting of the Kings of France and England at the Field of the Cloth of Gold.² Cardinal Adrian was nominated as Regent of Spain during the King's absence.³

¹ See VANDENESSE's *Itinerary of the Emperor Charles V.*

[While Charles was on his way to Coruña he met the messengers from Cortes, bearing the royal share of the richest plunder yet obtained from the Indies, the presents sent by Montezuma (*post*, pp. 189, 196). The bearers, Francisco de Montejo and Alonso de Puertocarrero, were instructed to obtain the confirmation of the position of Cortes as independent of Velazquez, and, by the gentle aid of the gold, would probably have succeeded but for the influence of Bishop Fonseca, who had reason to help Velazquez, he being betrothed to a relative of the bishop. Charles, pressed for time, deceived by official procrastination, and perhaps taking comparatively little interest in the Indies, sailed without coming to any decision.]

² . . . "Although at the entreaty of the King of France, the English King had promised an interview on their respective borders at the town of Calais, which agreement was greatly mistrusted by the Emperor's party. It being to be feared what hurt might befall the Emperor's affairs by this meeting if it should happen that any one should advise and consult with the King of England before the Emperor himself."—PETER MARTYR, *Epist.* 669.

³ [Charles was absent until 17th June 1522. The interval had been

In the settlement of the details of the Clerigo's business, he was left to the mercy of the Bishop of Burgos, and a most formidable opposition might in consequence have been expected; but, strange to say, the Bishop facilitated the settlement of the affair,¹ thus showing himself to have some nobleness of mind, for, the King and the Flemish ministers having departed, Las Casas was but a shadow of his former self. The Clerigo, too, meeting his old adversary's relentings with equal generosity, expresses a hope (though mingled with great fear about the result) that *all* the mischief the Bishop had been the cause of in the Indies might not come upon his soul; and Las Casas finds some excuse for the Bishop in his not having been a learned man, but having followed the ignorance of the learned. Each must have felt for the other as one of the chiefs in Ossian, who says, "I love a foe like Cathmor: his soul is great; his arm is strong; there is fame in his battles. But the little soul is like a vapour, that hovers round a marshy lake. It never rises on the green hill, lest the winds meet it there."

We must not suppose that, absorbed in all these secular negotiations, the Clerigo had changed the main drift of his purpose. That was still spiritual, or, at the lowest, philanthropic, as we may gather from a remarkable answer which he made at an early stage of the proceedings to

filled, in Spain, by civil war, of which the details, as a whole, are foreign to this work. But there is one remarkable demand among the eighty-two made by the insurgents—that the enslavement of the natives in the Indies should cease, the desire for gold and silver being no excuse for it. We may infer from this that the influence of Las Casas and his brother monks had extended over a wider area than the Court, and that if the King and the Council of the Indies had permitted themselves to be convinced it was because they recognised that they had to reckon with popular feeling as well as with abstract principles of justice.]

¹ "After the departure of the King, the bishop treated the Clerigo very well, paying no regard to the offences given him, in which he showed himself generous and to be of a noble mind, since after the departure of the King and all the Flemings, who favoured him on account of the goodness of his cause, the Clerigo was left without any support."—LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxvi, p. 163.

54 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

a certain licentiate, called Aguirre, a very good man, of great authority in those times, whom Queen Isabella had chosen for one of her executors. This man had always loved and favoured Las Casas, but when he found that the Clerigo was pursuing an enterprize in which Aguirre heard of rents being paid to the King, and of honours being sought for by Las Casas, on behalf of his companions, the licentiate said "that such a manner of proceeding in preaching the gospel had scandalized him, for it evinced an aiming after temporal interests, which he had never hitherto suspected in the Clerigo."¹

Las Casas, having heard what Aguirre had said, took occasion to speak to him one day in the following terms: "Señor, if you were to see our Lord Jesus Christ maltreated, vituperated, and afflicted, would you not implore with all your might that those who had him in their power would give him to you, that you might serve and worship him?" "Yes," said Aguirre. "Then," replied Las Casas, "if they would not give him to you, but would sell him, would you redeem him?" "Without a doubt." "Well, then, Señor," rejoined Las Casas, "that is what I have done, for I have left in the Indies Jesus Christ, our Lord, suffering stripes, and afflictions, and crucifixion, not once but thousands of times, at the hands of the Spaniards, who destroy and desolate those Indian nations, taking from them the opportunity of conversion and penitence, so that they die without faith and without sacraments."

Then Las Casas went on to explain how he had sought to remedy these things in the way that Aguirre would most have approved. To this the answer had been, that the King would have no rents, wherefore, when he, Las Casas, saw that his opponents would sell him the gospel, he had offered those temporal inducements which Aguirre had heard of and disapproved.

The licentiate considered this a sufficient answer, and so, I think, would any reasonable man.

¹ LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxvi, p. 81.

CHAPTER III

THE PEARL COAST AND ITS INHABITANTS

HISTORY seems often to be only a record of great opportunities missed or mismanaged. Amidst the tumult of small things which require immediate attention, and which press at least fully as much upon persons in great place as upon private individuals, the most important transactions are not appreciated in their true proportions. Besides—and this is the fatal circumstance—when great affairs are in their infancy, and are most tractable to human endeavour, they then appear of the smallest importance; and all consideration about them is lost in attending to the full-blown events of the current day, which, however, are rapidly losing their significance.

Thus it fared with the plan of Las Casas, which had now been brought, by almost incredible efforts on his part, to the first landing-place of success. No person—neither King, courtier, nor ecclesiastic—appreciated the magnitude of the transaction. The King and his court were hurrying off to Germany. The Council of the Indies, which had never been friendly to Las Casas, probably looked upon his plan as little differing from the schemes they were daily considering, and were no doubt glad to get rid of one who had proved a constant thorn in their sides. The friendly Flemings did not think of supplying Las Casas with funds before they left: his own had long been exhausted in this laborious suit; and, if he had not been enabled to borrow some money at Seville, the expedition must have fallen to the ground from sheer want of means to initiate it.

This would have been the more to be regretted, as Las Casas had succeeded in obtaining an extent of territory large enough for the most ample experiment of colonization. It reached from the province of Paria to that of Santa Martha, about two hundred and sixty leagues along

56 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

the coast, and was to extend right through the country to the Pacific, a distance of two thousand five hundred leagues, and so it seems would have included the country lying immediately northwards of Peru, and some part of Peru itself.¹ If Las Casas had been a rich and powerful man, or had been well supported by the rich and powerful, he might easily have altered the fate of South America.

The narrative, after many turnings and windings, in the difficult navigation of affairs at court, has now come to that point, where Las Casas, having conquered his troubles in Spain, was ready to start for the Tierra-firme, tolerably well equipped with all the things that were necessary for a great enterprize of colonization in that part of the world. It remains to be seen how far the Tierra-firme was ready to receive him; and whether there would be that concurrence of favourable circumstances, upon which success in any enterprize depends, or at least without which success is in the highest degree difficult. For this purpose, it is necessary for the writer to go back a long way in the history of the Indies, to resuscitate Columbus, who had now for many years found the true rest of the tomb, and to describe, at some length, the discovery and settlement of that part of the Tierra-firme which had been granted by the King of Spain to the Clerigo, Las Casas.

Nay, further, to bring the subject with anything like completeness before the mind of the reader, it will be advisable to anticipate the Spanish Conquest, and to make some endeavour, at least, to describe the inhabitants of the coast of Cumaná (otherwise called the Pearl Coast),

¹ "There was committed to his protection the territory from the province of Pária inclusive to that of Santa Marta exclusive, an extent of coast running two hundred and sixty leagues, a little more or less, east and west, and from both boundaries running in a straight line to the opposite coast of the South Sea, which is (as was known later) more than two thousand five hundred leagues within the continent, there being no other sea till the Straits of Magellan."—LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxvi, p. 162.

[The extreme length of South America is 1800, and its greatest breadth 1200, Spanish leagues. When La Casas wrote, its size and configuration were only imperfectly known.]

and their mode of life, before they had seen the face of a white man. Hitherto, in the course of this narrative, when the word "Indians" has occurred, it has conveyed little more information than if the words "savages," "aborigines," or "copper-coloured men," had been used. And, indeed, so much is our knowledge of different tribes intermingled and confused, that it would be presumptuous to say with respect to any account given, even after the utmost research, of the inhabitants of any particular part of the coast, that it was exactly faithful. Still, some attempt must be made; and, as there was a general resemblance in the languages spoken by the adjacent tribes, even though they could not understand each other,¹ so in the life of these several tribes there was a general basis of accordance, which we must endeavour to bring before our minds, if we would take the full interest in their story, which its importance to the world demands for it.

The traveller of modern days sees these various tribes under a very different aspect from that which they must have presented to the Spanish conquerors, and especially from that which they would have presented to any thoughtful and scientific explorer who had accompanied or preceded those conquerors. The stagnant life of the Indian in the Missions—the suppressed life of the Indian under the civil rule of another race, essentially different from his own—will give but little idea of what that life was, before the Indians had seen any vessels other than their own swift *piraguas* hollowed from the trunks of trees.

Even the laws which were meant to be most considerate for the Indians, and which were obtained with such difficulty by benevolent churchmen like Las Casas, or kind-hearted statesmen like Charles the Fifth, have proved a sad restraint upon the energies of the race, as no man leans long on any person, or thing, without losing some of his own original power and energy. It was ordained, for

¹ "The Cumanagotos, the Tamanacs, the Chaymas, the Guaraons, and the Caribbees, do not understand each other, in spite of the frequent analogy of words and of grammatical structure exhibited in their respective idioms."—HUMBOLDT'S *Personal Narrative*, i, chap. 9.

58 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

instance, that no Indian should have any transaction of buying or selling which involved a sum greater than a certain small specified amount. This law was passed to protect the Indian: the modern traveller naturally and justly sees in it an instance of the childlike subjection under which the Indians have been kept. No wonder that he observes in going into their huts, that he can discern little or no difference between the countenances of the father and the son,¹ so few and so flaccid have been the emotions that have passed through the mind, and impressed themselves upon that unerring indicator, the visage, even in the Indian whose time of life is such, that had he been a man of different race and country, the cruel wrinkles would have been in abundance, like the lines in a map, telling no slight portion of his troubled history.

From all that I have been able to learn of the Indians on the coast of Cumaná, at the period preceding the Spanish Conquest, I should certainly not be inclined to class them under the head of savage tribes. They had ceased to be nomadic. They lived in villages. They were expert fishermen. And here it may be noticed, that the sea performs the same function in civilizing men that the settlement and cultivation of lands do, giving them a

¹ "All the Chaymas have a sort of family look; and this resemblance, so often observed by travellers, is the more striking, as between the ages of twenty and fifty, difference of years is no way denoted by wrinkles of the skin, colour of the hair, or decrepitude of the body. On entering a hut, it is often difficult among adult persons to distinguish the father from the son, and not to confound one generation with another. I attribute this air of family resemblance to two different causes, the local situation of the Indian tribes, and their inferior degree of intellectual culture."—HUMBOLDT's *Personal Narrative*, i, chap. 9.

See also the account of the missionary GUMILLA: "The hair in all, without any exception, is black, coarse, long, and poor, with the appreciable advantage that very many years are required to bring about the change to greyness. This is a new argument in corroboration of the old belief that grey hairs are the legitimate consequence of the troubles and cares of advancing years. So that I believe there is nowhere to be found any people who bear their years so well, and show the advance of age so little as the Indians, among whom grey hairs hardly commence to show at seventy years."—*Historia Natural, Civil y Geográfica de las Naciones del Orinoco*, i, cap. 5.

THE INDIANS OF THE PEARL COAST 59

fixed place of work and a settled occupation. These Indians were skilful in hunting, but were not hunters only, for they had domestic animals which the women tended. An immense love for the solitude of nature,¹ the reminiscence perhaps of an earlier state, beset them; and, no doubt, they enjoyed their indolent thoughts in their bewildering tropical forests, free from the imperfect sympathy of other men. They knew how to barter; and all the sagacity that comes from bartering was theirs. Their arithmetic certainly was limited, or would appear so to a European, proceeding by those natural divisions of fives, tens, and twenties, which correspond with fingers and toes. They had not only the various vessels requisite for domestic purposes, but also works of art, imitations of the animal nature around them. Their dress was scanty, but what there was of it, was beautiful and useful; and civilized nations, at least in modern times, have so little to say for themselves in the matter of dress, that perhaps it would be better to omit any comparisons on this head, and to allow that we are more savage than those whom we call savages, only that they perform upon their skins the follies which we display in our dress. One ornament these Indians wore—a fatal ornament for them—namely, strings of pearls.

Their languages were forcible and well-constructed. With equal vigour and courtesy they pointed out the object² first in their sentences, reminding us in this respect of the Latin tongue. The wife, welcoming her husband from the forest, would exclaim, "Thee with joy beholding am I"; the husband, speaking of his victories, would say, "Enemies many conquered have I."

¹ "The irresistible desire the Indians have to flee from society, and enter again on a nomadic life, causes even young children sometimes to leave their parents, and wander four or five days in the forests, living on fruits, palm-cabbage and roots. When travelling in the Missions, it is not uncommon to find whole villages almost deserted, because the inhabitants are in their gardens, or in the forests (al monte)."—HUMBOLDT'S *Personal Narrative*, i, chap. 9.

² See HUMBOLDT'S *Personal Narrative*, i, chap. 9.

[It is uncertain how many languages were spoken in ancient America. Computation ranges between 400—that of Squier—to 1700, that of H. W. Bates.]

60 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

It was a language, as the philologists would say, of "agglutination," not, I believe, the highest form of language, but still full of picturesque beauty. Their mode of reckoning years was by the principal events in them. They spoke of "so many rains," as so many seasons.

We know little of their intellectual development,¹ of whether they could discourse well, and what they had to discourse about; but we know that nowadays an Indian in authority will harangue the people of his *pueblo* for hours, apportioning their duties to them, apparently with all due eloquence.² I conceive from their general intelligence they must have had such things as proverbs drawn from their own simple habits, or from those of the animals around them—such proverbs as have been found even in the Bight of Benin,³ amongst a people certainly in no respect superior to the Indians. Their mirth would be small, and of a poor kind, for it is civilization, with its odd contrasts and sly irony of situation, putting the fool where the wise man should be, the buffoon where the scholar, the soldier where

¹ The conquerors, coming to a new country, wrote of the plants, the trees, and the animals,—specimens of which remain; but few have recorded anything which serves to disclose the thoughts of the new races of men they saw,—and these, for the most part, have perished or are greatly changed. If a Spaniard had made a friend of any Indian, we might have known whether they loved as we love, wherein lay their melancholy (if they were advanced enough to be melancholy), and how the great problems of life pressed upon them.

² "I have often wondered at the volubility with which, at Caripe, the native *alcalde*, the *governador*, and the *sargento mayor*, will harangue for whole hours the Indians assembled before the church; regulating the labours of the week, reprimanding the idle, or threatening the disobedient."—HUMBOLDT'S *Personal Narrative*, i, chap. 9.

Las Casas makes a similar remark of some Indians in Central America:—

"It was a marvellous thing how fond they were of discussion and deliberation. In no manner would they venture to do anything—even the least thing of no importance—without first discussing it at length; of this I can say that I have seen somewhat."—LAS CASAS, *Hist. Apolog.*, c. 237.

³ "Áya seju ommo re kiwobò ó. 'The monkey winked its eye (very quickly, but not before) its young one thrust its finger into it': *i.e.* rapid as is the wink of the monkey's eye, it may be anticipated by the quicker motion of the young one's finger: (an exhortation to be

the bishop,¹ that gives so much animation and drollery to life, and, indeed, renders it tolerable to the humorist by making it so fantastical and absurd.

One bitter drop in the cup of ease and comfort which these Indians would otherwise have quaffed so leisurely, was to be found in that strange marauding race, the Caribs; and yet, in the molestation of those Caribs lay the germs of a possible civilization for quiet and peaceable tribes. These Caribs probably compelled the Chaymas to live in villages for self-defence. They made the science of war a thing necessary to be learnt.² They rendered negotiation needful. In short, they were the external element which performed the part that the restless Normans acted in Europe, and their unwelcome presence might have led to similar great results.

Before concluding this very imperfect, and yet very difficult sketch of the Indians of the Pearl Coast and its vicinity, I must mention two things which mark some civilization in the particular spots where they occur. One is, that they had seats to sit upon,³ and the other, that they knew that they were indolent and that this was an offence before the gods. This latter fact will appear from their religion, which I reserve for a more general description of the religions of America.

The physical circumstances surrounding these Indians expeditious in one's actions). Omi li ó dāno, akèregbe kò fò.—'It is only the water that is spilt; the calabash is not broken': i.e. though failure attended the first attempt, yet whilst there is means, another may be made with success."—CROWTHER'S *Yoruba Vocabulary*, Additional Proverbs, pp. 290, 291.

¹ For instance, how humorous are the allusions constantly made by Las Casas to the warlike propensities of the Bishop of Burgos.

² I cannot help concluding—and it is from very small circumstances that we can learn anything of these obscure tribes—that the fact of the word for fire being the same in the Caribbee and the Chayma language (in Chayma, *apoto*; in Tamanac, *uapto*; in Caribbean *uato*) is significant of a transaction which had often occurred of the burning of peaceful Chayma villages by these indomitable Caribs.

³ "Our people were taken into a very large house built with two fronts (á dos aguas), and not round and tent-shaped like the other houses are; here there were many seats on which they made our men sit down, they themselves taking other seats."—*Third Voyage of Columbus*; NAVARRETE, *Coleccion*, i, p. 251.

62 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

were very favourable. Animal life was abundant. Cereals, or productions which took the place of cereals, were easily obtained; and, as we shall soon see, regular tillage¹ was found amongst them. Above all, a vast fishing bank² near the island of Margarita exercised their skill as fishermen.

Any large extent of history contains such ludicrous and deplorable incidents that it would hardly be a thing to be wondered at, if all writers of history were to become cynical or sarcastic men. The history of this coast is not without such incidents. It was, at the time I have depicted it, namely before the Conquest, a happy, smiling coast, vexed occasionally by Caribs, but otherwise, a bright spot on the earth, where men, without making much pretence to anything that is elevated in human nature, lived peaceably and pleasantly enough, under the shade of their own cocoa trees, looking out upon some of the grandest aspects of nature. If they thought at all about the matter, they must have been delighted with the rich supplies of food which they obtained so easily from their oyster-beds. But the diseases of a creature, apparently occupying a low place in the scale of creation, were fated to be the means of dissolving the whole of Indian society in these parts, and of reducing large districts from a state of cultivation into a state of nature, so that it is only conjectured now by the skilful naturalist, founding his conjecture upon the prevalence of some particular flower, that they once were cultivated.

¹ "In the forests of South America there are tribes of natives, peacefully united in villages, and who render obedience to chiefs. They cultivate the plantain-tree, cassava, and cotton, on a tolerably extensive tract of ground, and they employ the cotton for weaving hammocks. These people are scarcely more barbarous than the naked Indians of the missions, who have been taught to make the sign of the cross. It is a common error in Europe, to look on all natives not reduced to a state of subjection, as wanderers and hunters. Agriculture was practised on the continent long before the arrival of Europeans."—HUMBOLDT'S *Personal Narrative*, i, chap. 9.

² "The *Guaquieries*, or *Guaikeri*, are the most able and most intrepid fishermen of these countries. These people alone are well acquainted with the bank abounding with fish which surrounds the islands of Coche, Margarita, Sola, and Testigos; a bank of more than four hundred square leagues, extending east and west from Maniquarez to the Boca del Draco."—HUMBOLDT'S *Personal Narrative*, i, chap. 9.

It is strange that this little glistening bead, the pearl, should have been the cause of so much movement in the world as it has been. There must be something essentially beautiful in it, however, for it has been dear to the eyes both of civilized and of uncivilized people. The dark-haired¹ Roman lady, in the palmiest days of Rome, cognizant of all the beautiful productions in the world, valued the pearl as highly as ever did the simple Indian woman; and a love for these glistening beads came upon the Spaniards from two² quarters—from the Romans who had colonized them, and from the Moors they had conquered. So general, indeed, was the love for pearls, that it was to be expected that whatever country in the wide circuit of the whole world was cursed with an abundance of pearl-producing oysters, would be sure, when the fact was discovered, to become a theatre for displaying the rapacity of the rest of mankind.

The perilous nature, however, of his sub-marine possessions was not yet visible to the poor innocent Indian on the coast of Paria or Cumaná; and it was with childish delight that he threw the strings of pearls (strung in a way that would have driven the jewellers of Europe wild with vexation) on the smooth brown arm or rich brown neck of his beloved.³

Without entering into any of the old controversies respecting the comparative felicity of civilized and savage life, it must be admitted that the life, as above described, of the Indians on the north-eastern coast of

¹ I have great doubts whether these ornaments would ever have been admired so much, or sought for so eagerly, if a fair-haired people had been the first to set the fashions of the world.

[The Chinese prize yellow pearls.]

² "Pearls were the more sought after, as the luxury of Asia had been introduced into Europe by two ways diametrically opposite: that of Constantinople, where the Palæologi wore garments covered with strings of pearls; and that of Granada, the residence of the Moorish kings, who displayed at their court all the luxury of the East."—HUMBOLDT'S *Personal Narrative*, i, chap. 5.

³ [The fisheries were very productive for a long time, nearly 700 pounds' weight of pearls being obtained in one year—1587. One of the finest pearls found, called *La Pelegrina*, weighed 134 grains, and was presented to Philip II.]

64 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

South America, was not such as to give humanity any cause to be ashamed of it; and, moreover, that it contained a promise of better things which might be developed. It was a society which no benevolent and thinking man would have taken upon himself the responsibility of destroying. People of what is called advanced civilization have not made so noble and bright a thing of life, as to entitle them to be very censorious upon the ruder attempts of others. If we may describe the life of the most civilized nations by an allusion to their modes of representing it upon the stage, we are compelled to confess, that it has not hitherto been dignified enough for a tragedy, not graceful enough for a comedy, and certainly not merry enough for a farce. Such, at least, is the way in which a sarcastic advocate for the uncivilized communities would argue.

Moreover, he would contend, that, in this said civilization, men are crowded together without preparation for being in such close contact; and that hence arises a squalidity and a sordidness of life, which were unknown to these Indians we have been describing.¹ Again, in civilized communities, most men have become portions of a great machine, performing their small part but too well, and mostly unconscious of the drift and meaning of the great machine itself. The people live amidst great things (which is not without its advantage to the mind), but often they understand them not; whereas the semi-civilized man—savage as we call him—does fully comprehend the processes of work around him. In all comparisons between the two states, therefore, this point—namely, how much the average man understands of the state of things around him—is to be considered.

It is a very fitting opportunity to enter upon such considerations, when, as in the narrative of the discovery of the New World, great masses of civilized and uncivilized men are to be brought together in the sternest

¹ It is curious that the early discoverers and conquerors seldom or never speak of any absence of cleanliness in the Indian huts or villages, and it seems to have been reserved for the temples of the Indians to manifest that filth and squalor which belong to such considerable portions of the great cities of the civilized world.

contact and contrast. Would that such self-humbling thoughts had often been present to the men from the Old World, borne up as they were upon the intelligence and valour of the few men in each generation who had done or thought any new thing, but not in themselves so far superior to the men of the New World whom they came to conquer, as to warrant any outrageous contempt for them.

The impending change of scene for the Indians of the Pearl Coast is something awful to contemplate, a change greater than anything but death. We often picture to ourselves the wild and wondrous feelings of the men from Europe, who came and discovered these new lands; but we hardly can bring home to our minds the amazement which the men of the New World experienced in beholding their strange visitors, or the dismay with which they must have regarded the destruction of all that they loved, honoured, and venerated. It was what an earthquake is to the man who feels it for the first time, or, from its continuousness, more like the incursion of barbarians amongst a people who had never read or heard of barbarians. And it was natural that they should ask, as they did, whether these destroying creatures had descended from the air, or risen (as the ancients fabled of Venus) from the foam of the sea.¹

The above gives some faint outline of what men did and felt in that part of South America called the Pearl Coast, before the appearance of Columbus. To carry on the story for twenty-three years to the point of the Clerigo's arrival, it will still be necessary to describe the way in which Columbus continued to lift, as it were, the veil between the Old and New Continent, and also to give some account of the occupation of the Pearl Coast

¹ *Viracocha* (foam of the sea) was the name given by the Peruvians to the Spaniards.

[*Viracocha*, or *Uira-Cocha*, was the name of the Peruvian supreme deity, supposed to have been handed down to them from an earlier empire, and applied to the Spaniards.]

66 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

by those who availed themselves of the great Admiral's discoveries, up to the very point of time when Las Casas, having overcome his difficulties at court, had been entrusted with the government of a vast territory, stretching from Paria to Santa Martha.

Perhaps in all histories, and certainly in one so fragmentary, and where portions of the story resemble one another so much, as that of the conquest and colonization of America, it is worth while, occasionally, to go through the most exhaustive process in accumulating and discussing details, in order to attain that mastery over some one section of the subject, which, when thus mastered, will be a key to similar sections of the history, and render it needless to keep in mind, or bring prominently forward, similar classes of details. A story may often be better told, and assuredly better remembered, if it be enriched, and light be thrown into it, by certain sections being well studied and carefully worked out, even though in other parts it is rather vague or succinct, than by an equable narrative which everywhere gives many facts, but nowhere goes into profound detail. Another reason, also, for dwelling carefully, I had almost said painfully, upon some portions of a story, giving all the details that can be found, is, that such a mode of treatment leaves to other minds some opportunity of seeing a new significance in these details, which had escaped the original composer of the narrative, and which it would have been much more difficult to deduce from a level narrative of the kind I have alluded to.

It would have been easy in the present case, simply to state that Columbus discovered Paria, to assume that there was no difference worth recording between the Indians of the Pearl Coast and others who have already been described, and then to give an outline of the occupation by the Spaniards of this coast and of the adjacent island of Cubagua, in the brief manner that Cæsar might have narrated a victory. But no wisdom is to be gained from such a meagre narrative, unless it can be interpreted by a full one of a similar nature; and

REASONS FOR CLOSE EXAMINATION 67

it would be doing injustice to the great attempt of Las Casas, to omit illustrating it by the details which for its sake so well deserve to be recorded, and some of which must have been within his knowledge at the time he formed his noble project.

CHAPTER IV

DISCOVERY OF THE CONTINENT BY COLUMBUS, AND OTHER RETROSPECTIVE HISTORY CONNECTED WITH THE PEARL COAST

A GOOD starting-point for that important part of the narrative which comes next—namely, the discovery of the American continent by Columbus—will be a recital of the first clause in the instructions given by Ferdinand and Isabella to the Admiral, in the year 1497, previously to his undertaking his third voyage—a voyage which, though not to be compared to his first one, is still very memorable, on account of the discoveries he made, and the sufferings he experienced in the course of it.

The first clause of the instructions is to the effect, that the Indians of the islands are to be brought into peace and quietude, being reduced into subjection “benignantly”; and also, as the principal end of the conquest, that they be converted to the sacred Catholic Faith, and have the holy Sacraments administered to them.¹

It will be needless to recount the vexations of that “much-enduring man,” Columbus, before his embarkation. Suffice it to say, that he set sail from the port of San Lucar on the 30th of May 1498, with six vessels, and two hundred men, in addition to the sailors that were necessary to navigate the vessels. In the course of his voyage he was obliged to avoid a French squadron which was cruising in those seas, as France and Spain

¹ “Bringing them to serve us, and under our lordship and subjection, benignantly, principally that they may be converted to our holy Catholic Faith; and that to them and to all who go to these territories in the said Indies be administered the holy Sacraments by the monks and ecclesiastics who are there and go there, so that our Lord be duly served and our consciences secured.”—LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxiii, p. 198.

THIRD VOYAGE OF COLUMBUS 69

were then at war. From Gomara, one of the Canary islands, he despatched three of his ships directly to Hispaniola, declaring in his instructions to their commanders, that he was going to the Cape Verde islands, and thence, "in the name of the Sacred Trinity," to navigate to the south of those islands, until he should arrive under the equinoxial line, in the hope of being guided by God to discover something which may be to His service, and to that of our Lords, the King and Queen, and to the honour of Christendom; "for, I believe," he adds, "that no one has ever traversed this way, and that this sea is nearly unknown."¹

With one ship, therefore, and two caravels, the great Admiral made for the Cape Verde islands, "a false name," as he observes, for nothing was to be seen there of a green colour. He reached these islands on the 27th of June, and quitted them on the 4th of July, having been in the midst of such a dense fog all the time, that, he says, "it might have been cut with a knife." Thence he proceeded to the south-west, intending afterwards to take a westerly direction. When he had gone, as he says, one hundred and twenty leagues, he began to find those floating fields of sea-weed which he had encountered in his first voyage. Here he took an observation at night-fall, and found that the north star was in five degrees.² The wind suddenly

¹ LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxiii, p. 222.

² I do not venture to give an explanation of his meaning in this passage: the exact words are "adonde en anocheiendo tenia la estrella del norte en cinco grados."—See NAVARRETE, *Col.*, i, p. 246.

As it would be desirable, however, not only for the history of navigation, but even for the purposes of present science, to understand the observations taken by Columbus in this memorable voyage, I shall point out one or two of the difficulties, leaving it for those persons who have studied the instruments and the modes of observation in use at the latter end of the fifteenth century, to remove, if possible, these difficulties.

It is said by those who have studied the route of Columbus in this voyage that he never went below the eighth degree of latitude.

Now if we may infer from the words "the north star was in five degrees" that Columbus, aware of the fact that the altitude of the pole equals the latitude of the place, was taking the latitude and found

70 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

abated, and the heat was intolerable; so much so, that nobody dared to go below deck to look after the wine and the provisions. This extraordinary heat lasted eight days. The first day was clear, and if the others had

it to be 5° —this, though a great error, would not be an inadmissible one. A combination of bad instruments and bad methods, in the hands of a bad observer, might give an error of two or three degrees. There is, however, a curious statement of Navarrete's, that Columbus's instruments gave double altitudes, which would increase the difficulty. I must leave this part of the question to astronomers. Navarrete's words are,—“The quadrants of that time measured a double altitude, and consequently the 42° , which he made himself to be north of the equator, should be reduced to 21° of north latitude, which is nearly the parallel on which Columbus sailed.”—*NAVARRETE, Colección*, i, p. 44, n.

[This comment by Navarrete refers to observations taken by Columbus in his first voyage. Sir Clements Markham (*Life of Columbus*, p. 110) remarks on it: “The quadrants of those days certainly did nothing of the kind, and if they had made the altitude double, the resulting latitude would not have been double. The explanation is much more simple. The clerk who copied the document mistook 2 for 4.”]

Again, from other passages it appears that Columbus, in the course of this voyage, was taking the polar distance of the north star, upon which, as will hereafter be seen, he based a false theory of the earth not being a true sphere, but pear-shaped. M. HUMBOLDT thus describes the error of Columbus:—“But the explanations that he ventured of some erroneous observations of the North Star made in the neighbourhood of the Azores on the superior and inferior transits of the star; and his hypothesis of an irregular and non-spherical shape of the earth, swollen in part of the equatorial zone towards the coast of Paria, show that he was very weak in the elements of geometrical Science.”—*Examen Critique*, iii, p. 17.

It is, however, to be remarked, that this first observation, alluded to in the text, occurs, as I conceive, or may have occurred, separately from the false observations referred to by M. HUMBOLDT. These are mentioned further on in the narrative:—“I found there that at nightfall the North Star was five degrees high, and at that time the satellites were above; afterwards, at midnight, I found the star in ten degrees of height, and at daybreak the satellites were fifteen below.

“I found the smoothness of the sea continue, but not so the weeds: as for the North Star, I watched it with great wonder, and many nights took it and re-took it very carefully with the quadrant, and I always found that the lead and line fell to the same point.”—*NAVARRETE, Colección*, i, p. 255.

The real polar distance of the north star is $1^{\circ} 58' 47''$.

It is to be remarked that Columbus, in the above passage, states that he made several observations, and that the north star at night-fall was always in five degrees. The track of his voyage, carefully made from his own narrative, is for a very long distance together in the same parallel of latitude.

been like it, the Admiral says, not a man would have been left alive, but they would all have been burnt up.

At last a favourable breeze sprang up, enabling the Admiral to take a westerly course, the one he most desired, as he had before noticed in his voyages to the Indies that about a hundred miles west of the Azores there was always a sudden change of temperature.¹ On Sunday, the 22nd of July, in the evening, the sailors saw innumerable birds going from the south-west to the north-east, which flight of birds was a sign that land was not far off. For several successive days birds were seen and an albatross perched upon the Admiral's vessel. Still the fleet went on without seeing land, and, as it was in want of fresh water, the Admiral was thinking of changing his course; and, indeed, on Thursday, the 31st of July, had commenced steering northwards for some hours, when, to use his own words, "as God had always been accustomed to show mercy to him,"² a certain mariner of Huelva, a follower of

I have consulted an eminent person in science, who says, "I have no doubt that, in the fifteenth century, a small handful of degrees was no uncommon error in the observations of an ordinary seaman—and we know nothing of Columbus, as an observer, which should induce us to force any presumptions in his favour." For my own part, though inclined, with Peter Martyr, to touch the matter "with a dry foot" ("*De poli etiam varietate quedam refert, quæ, * * * sicco pertingam pede*"), I cannot help thinking that Columbus was not so much out in all his observations in this third voyage, as from the above he appears to be. It would be worth while for some eminent cosmographer to take this voyage of Columbus and illustrate it carefully. It is not often in the world's history that a series of observations has led to more immediate and practical results.

[In all probability Sir Arthur Helps was right in standing by Columbus. From the discoverer's description of the weather, he had clearly got into the equatorial belt of calms; there he drifted for a week on the equatorial current until that brought him into touch with the southern edge of the trade wind.—"Therefore his error must be in the distance run."—FISKE, *Discovery of America*, i, p. 488.]

¹ I suppose he came into or out of one of those warm ocean rivers which have so great an effect in modifying the temperature of the earth—perhaps into the one which comes from the south of Africa through the Gulf of Mexico, to our own shores, and on which we so much depend.

² NAVARRETE, *Coleccion*, i, p. 247.

72 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

the Admiral's, named Alonso Perez, happened to go up aloft upon the maintop-sail of the Admiral's ship, and suddenly saw land towards the south-west, about fifteen leagues off. This land which he descried was in the form of three lofty hills or mountains. It would be but natural to conjecture that, as Columbus had resolved to name the first land he should discover "Trinidad," it was by an effort of the will, or of the imagination, that these three eminences were seen first; but it is exceedingly probable that such eminences were to be seen from the point whence Alonso Perez first saw land.¹

The sailors sang the "Salve Regina," with other pious hymns in honour of God and "Our Lady," according to the custom of the mariners of Spain, who, in terror or in joy, were wont to find an expression for their feelings in such sacred canticles.²

The Admiral's course, when he was going northwards, had been in the direction of the Carib islands, already well known to him: but with great delight he now turned towards Trinidad, making for a cape, which, from the likeness of a little rocky islet near it to a galley in full sail, he named "La Galera."³ There he arrived "at the hour of complines," but, not finding the port sufficiently deep for his vessels to enter, he proceeded westwards.

The first thing noticeable on the shores, as he neared them, was that the trees descended to the sea. There were houses and people, and very beautiful lands, which

¹ Cape Cashepou is backed by three peaked mountains, of which a representation is given in DAY's *West Indies*, ii, p. 31.

² "They sang the *Salve Regina* and other devout psalms and prayers which contain praise of God and Our Lady, according to the custom of seamen, at least of our Spanish seamen, who in sorrow and joy are equally wont to use them."—LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxiii, p. 229.

[At this time it was the custom among the seamen of all countries to say prayers and sing psalms at the setting of the morning and evening watches. In the English service the habit died out during the seventeenth century.]

³ This point is sometimes placed at the north-east of Trinidad; but wrongly so. It is now Cape Galeota.—See HUMBOLDT'S *Examen Critique*, i, p. 310.

reminded him, from their beauty and their verdure, of the gardens of Valencia as seen in the month of March.¹ It was also to be observed that these lands were well cultivated.²

On the following morning he continued in a westerly direction in search of a port, where he might take in water and refit his ships, the timbers of which had shrunk from extreme heat, so that they sadly needed caulking. He did not find a port, but he came to deep soundings somewhere near Point Alcatraz, where he brought to, and took in fresh water.³ This was on a Wednesday, the first of August. From the point where he now was, the low lands of the Orinoco must have been visible, and Columbus must have beheld the continent of America for the first time.⁴ He supposed it to be an island of about twenty leagues in extent, and he gave it the somewhat insignificant name of Zeta.⁵

The same signs of felicity which greeted his eyes on his first sight of land, continued to manifest themselves. Farms and populous places⁶ were visible above the water as he coasted onwards; and still the trees descended towards the sea—a sure sign of the general mildness of the weather, wherever it occurs.

The next day he proceeded westwards along the southern part of Trinidad, until he arrived at the westernmost point, which he called “La punta de Arenal”; and now he beheld the gulf of Paria, which he called “La Balena” (the gulf of the whale). It was just after the

¹ “There were houses and people and very beautiful country, as fresh and green as the gardens of Valencia in March.”—NAVARRETE, *Coleccion*, i, p. 247.—“May,” says LAS CASAS.

² “The land lying high, closely cultivated, and goodly to see.”—LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxiii, p. 231.

³ [Or Punta de la Playa (Markham), or Bay of Guayara (Harris). Columbus says that he ran five leagues from Cape La Galera to his watering-place; Punta de Alcatraz is more than that distance.]

⁴ The northern part of the continent had been discovered by Sebastian Cabot, on the 24th of June 1497. [By John Cabot, and the month is doubtful.—See HARRISSE, *John Cabot . . . and Sebastian his son.*]

⁵ [Isla Santa, or Holy Island. This was two months and ten days after Vasco de Gama had solved the eastern route to India by arriving at Calicut.]

⁶ “Many signs of husbandry and of an abundant population were seen along the coast.”—LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxiii, p. 231.

rainy season, and the great rivers which flow into that gulf were causing its waters to rush with impetuosity out of the two openings¹ which lead into the open sea. The contest between the fresh water and the salt water produced a ridge of waters, on the top of which the Admiral was borne into the gulf at such risk, that, writing afterwards of this event to the Spanish court, he says, "Even to-day I shudder lest the waters should have upset the vessel when they came under its bows."²

Previously to entering the gulf, the Admiral had sought to make friends with some Indians who approached him in a large canoe, by ordering his men to come upon the poop, and dance to the sound of a tambourine; but this, naturally enough, appears to have been mistaken for a warlike demonstration, and it was answered by a flight of arrows from the Indians.

The Admiral, still supposing that he was amongst islands, called the land to the left of him, as he moved up the gulf, the island of Gracia; and he continued to make a similar mistake throughout the whole of his course up the gulf, taking the various projections of the indented coast for islands. Throughout his voyage in the gulf, Columbus met with nothing but friendly treatment from the natives. At last he arrived at a place which the natives told him was called Paria, and where they also informed him that, to the westward, the country was more populous. He took four of these natives, and went onwards, until he came to a point which he named *Aguja* (Needle Point), where, he says, he found the most beautiful lands in the world, very populous, and whence, to use his own words, "an infinite number of canoes came off to the ships."

Proceeding onwards, the Admiral came to a place where the women had pearl bracelets, and, on his inquiring where these came from, they made signs, directing him out of the Gulf of Paria towards the island of Cubagua. Here he sent some of his men on shore, who were very well received and entertained by two of the principal Indians. It is needless to dwell upon this part of the

¹ The Boca del Drago and the Boca de la Sierpe.

² NAVARRETE, *Coleccion*, i, p. 249.

narrative. Very few of the places retain the names which the Admiral gave them, and, consequently, it is difficult to trace his progress. He began to conjecture, from the immense amount of fresh water brought down by the rivers into the Gulf of Paria, that the land which he had been calling the island of Gracia was not an island, but a continent, of which fact he afterwards became more convinced.¹ But little time was given him for research of any kind. He was anxious to reach Hispaniola, in order to see after his colonists there, and to bring them the stores which he had in charge; and so, after passing through the "Boca del Drago," and reconnoitring the island of Margarita, which he named, he was compelled to go on his way to Hispaniola. We are hardly so much concerned with what the Admiral saw and heard, as with what he afterwards thought and reported. To understand this, it will be desirable to enter somewhat into the scientific questions which occupied the mind of this great mariner and most observant man.

The discovery of the continent of America by Columbus in his third voyage, was the result of a distinct intention on his part to discover some new land, and cannot be attributed to chance. It would be difficult to define precisely the train of ideas which led Columbus to this discovery. The Portuguese navigations were one compelling cause.² Then the change, already alluded to, which Columbus had noticed in his voyages to the Indies, on passing a line a hundred leagues west of the Azores,

¹ "I believe that this is the greatest continent that has ever been found, and the reason which most convinced me is the existence of such a great river and sea of fresh water."—LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxiii, p. 264.

[These extracts from Las Casas are practically taken from the discoverer's letter to Ferdinand and Isabella, describing his voyage, and it must be understood that it is he, and not Las Casas, who is speaking in the first person.]

² The inhabitants of Santiago, one of the Cape Verde islands, told Columbus "that the King Don Juan was greatly desirous of sending to discover to the south-westward, and that they occasionally met with canoes going westward from the coast of Guinea with merchandize."—LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxiii, p. 225.

76 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

was in his mind, as it was in reality, a circumstance of great moment¹ and significance. It was not a change of temperature alone that he noticed, but a change in the heavens, the air, the sea, and the magnetic current.²

In the first place, the needles of the compass, instead of north-easting, north-wested at this line; and that remarkable phenomenon occurred just upon the passage of the line, as if, Columbus says, one passed a hill. Then the sea there was full of sea-weed like small pine-branches, laden with a fruit³ similar to pistachio nuts. Moreover, on passing this imaginary line, the Admiral had invariably found that the temperature became agreeable, and the sea calm. Accordingly, in the course of this voyage, when they were suffering from that great heat which has been mentioned, he determined to take a westerly course, which led, as we have seen, to his discovering the beautiful land of Paria.⁴

Now Columbus was one of those men of divining minds, who must have general theories on which to thread their observations; and as few persons have so just a claim to theorize as those who have added largely to the number of ascertained facts (a permission which they generally make abundant use of), so Columbus may well be listened to, when propounding his explanation of the wonderful change in sea, air, sky, and magnetic current, which he discerned at this distance of a hundred leagues from the Azores.

¹ It is the opinion of Humboldt, as mentioned before, that the celebrated division made by Alexander the Sixth between the Castillian and Portuguese monarchs was adopted in reference to these phenomena which Columbus had noticed; and, if the line of no variation were a "constant," no better marine boundary could well be suggested.

² "When I sailed from Spain to the Indies I found that, as soon as I had passed a hundred leagues to the westward of the Azores, there was a very great change in the sky, the stars, the temperature of the air, and the water of the sea."—*Third Voyage of Columbus*.—NAVARRETE, i, p. 254.

³ "He took the globulous and petiolated shoots for the fruit of the weed."—HUMBOLDT, *Examen Critique*, iii, p. 66, n.

⁴ Las Casas, who had other authentic information about this voyage besides the manuscripts of Columbus, says, that the Admiral intended to have gone southwards after he had taken a westerly course, on quitting the place where he was becalmed. Had he done so, which the state of his ships would not permit, he might have been the discoverer of Brazil.

His theory was, that the earth was not a perfect sphere, but pear-shaped; and he thought that, as he proceeded westwards in this voyage, the sea went gradually rising, and his ships rising too, until they came nearer to the heavens.¹ It is very possible that this theory had been long in his mind, or, at any rate, that he held it before he reached the coast of Paria. When there, new facts struck his mind, and were combined with his theory. He found the temperature much more moderate than might have been expected so near the equinoctial line, far more moderate than on the opposite coast of Africa. In the evenings, indeed, it was necessary for him to wear an outer garment of fur. Then, the natives were lighter coloured, more astute, and braver than those of the islands. Their hair,² too, was different.

Then, again, he meditated upon the immense volume of fresh waters which descended into the Gulf of Paria. And, in fine, the conclusion which his pious mind came to, was, that when he reached the land which he called the island of Gracia, he was at the base of the earthly Paradise. He also, upon reflection, concluded that it was a continent which he had discovered, the same continent of the east which he had always been in search of; and that the waters, which we now know to be a branch of the river Orinoco, formed one of the four great rivers which descended from the garden of Paradise.

Very different were the conjectures of the pilots. Some said that they were in the Sea of Spain; others, in that of Scotland, and, being in despair about their whereabouts, they concluded that they had been under the guidance of the Devil.³ The Admiral, however, was not a man to be much influenced by the sayings of the un-

¹ "I judged that the sea rose gently, and the ships rose with it towards the heavens."—LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxiii, p. 275.

² "The hair long and smooth, cut in Castillian fashion."—LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxiii, p. 234.

³ "Being in the region of Paria, the Admiral asked the pilots what they made the position to be; some said that they were in the sea of Spain, others that they were in the sea of Scotland, and that all the seamen were in despair, and said that the Devil had brought them there."—*El pleito por el fiscal del REY contra el ALMIRANTE*.—NAVARRETE, *Coleccion*, iii, p. 583.

78 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

thoughtful and the unlearned. He fortified himself by references to St. Isidro, Beda, Strabo, St. Ambrose, and Duns Scotus, and held stoutly to the conclusion that he had discovered the site of the earthly Paradise. It is said, that he exclaimed to his men, that they were in the richest country in the world.¹

Columbus did not forget to claim, with all due formalities, the possession of this approach to Paradise, for his employers, the Catholic Sovereigns. Accordingly, when at Paria, he had landed and taken possession of the coast in their names, erecting a great cross upon the shore, which, he tells Ferdinand and Isabella, he was in the habit of doing at every headland,² the religious aspect of the Conquest being one which always had great influence with the Admiral, as he believed it to have with the Catholic Monarchs. In communicating this discovery, he reminds them how they bade him go on with the enterprize, if he should discover only stones and rocks, and had told him that they counted the cost for nothing, considering that the Faith would be increased, and their dominions widened.³

It was, however, no poor discovery of mere "rocks and stones" which the Admiral had now made. It will be interesting to see his first impressions of the men and the scenery of this continent which he had now, unconsciously, for the first time, discovered. He says, "I

¹ "I say to you that you are in the richest country in the world—God be thanked for it."—OVIEDO, *Hist. Gen. y Nat. de Indias*, lib. 19, cap. 1.

² "In all the countries visited by Your Highnesses' ships I have caused a high cross to be fixed upon every headland."—*Third Voyage of Columbus*.—NAVARRETE, *Coleccion*, i, p. 262.

³ "Your Highnesses answered me with that nobleness of heart that all the world knows you to possess, and told me to pay no attention to these (calumnies), because it was your intention to follow up and support the undertaking although nothing was gained but stones and rocks. And whatever the expense might be, it was to be held of no account, for that much more expense had been incurred in matters of less importance; and that you considered what had been spent in the past and was to be spent in the future as well laid out, because you believed that our holy Faith would be increased and your royal dignity enhanced."—NAVARRETE, *Coleccion*, i, p. 263.

found some lands, the most beautiful¹ in the world, and very populous." The lands in the island of Trinidad he had previously compared to Valencia, in Spain, during the month of March. It is also noticeable that he had observed that the fields were cultivated.² Of the people, he says, "They are all of good stature, well made, and of very graceful bearing, with much and smooth hair"; and he mentions that on their heads they wore the beautiful Arab head-dress (called *keffeh*), made of worked and coloured handkerchiefs, which appeared in the distance as if they were silken.³

The description given by Columbus of the natives whom he encounters in his voyages is almost always favourable. Indeed, the description of any man or thing depends as much on the person describing, as on the thing or person described. Those little differences in look or dress, which excite the ready mockery of the untravelled rustic, appear very slight indeed to the man who, like Columbus or Las Casas, has seen many lands, and travelled over many minds. The rude Spanish common soldier perceived a far greater difference between himself and the Indian, than did the most accomplished man who visited the Indies, when he made to himself a similar comparison. Occasionally, in a narrow nature, however cultivated,⁴ the commonest prejudices hold their ground; but, in general, knowledge sees behind and beyond disgust, and suffices to conquer it.

Columbus, however, found the men, the country, and the products, equally admirable. It is somewhat curious

¹ This is confirmed by BENZONI. "For the rest, in my judgment, all this country round the Gulf of Paria towards the south is the most beautiful and fruitful of any that I have seen in any part of the Indies."—*Hist. Nov. Orbis*, lib. 1, cap. 3.

² "I reached a place where the land appeared to me to be cultivated."—*Third Voyage of Columbus*.—NAVARRETE, *Coleccion*, i, p. 250.

³ "They were all, as I have said, of good stature, well made, and of very graceful bearing, the hair very long and smooth, their heads bound round with handsome worked scarves, which at a distance resembled Moorish head-dresses of silk."—*Third Voyage of Columbus*.—NAVARRETE, *Coleccion*, i, p. 252.

⁴ As, perhaps, in that of the historian Oviedo, when speaking of the Indians whom he had lived amongst.

80 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

that he does not mention his discovery of pearls to the Catholic Monarchs, and he afterwards makes a poor excuse for this.¹ The real reason I conjecture to have been a wish to preserve this knowledge to himself, that the fruits of this enterprize might not be prematurely snatched from him. His shipmates, however, were sure to disperse the intelligence; and the gains to be made on the Pearl Coast were, probably, the most tempting bait for future navigators to follow in the track of Columbus, and complete the discovery of the earthly Paradise.

Of the delights of this paradise Columbus himself was to have but a slight and mocking foretaste. He had been constantly ill during the voyage, suffering from the gout and from an inflammation in his eyes which rendered him almost blind. His new colony in Hispaniola demanded his attention, and must often have been the cause of anxious thought to him; and the grave but glowing enthusiast made his way to St. Domingo, and afterwards returned to Spain, to be vexed henceforth by those mean miseries and small disputes which afflicted him for the remainder of his days—miseries the more galling, as they were so disproportionately small in comparison with the greatness of such a man, and with the aims and hopes which they effectually hindered.

It was in December of the same year, 1498, that the intelligence of the Admiral's new discovery reached Spain, and that his own enthusiastic ideas and vivid descriptions of the country he had discovered helped to give an impetus to maritime enterprize in that direction, which was alike injurious to his own fortunes, to the well-being of the inhabitants of those regions of delight, and to the adoption of anything like a sound system of colonization on the part of Spain. There never was an occasion on which

¹ [There is some misapprehension here. Columbus wrote to the Catholic Kings that when he was at Punta Aguja many of the natives who came off to the ships wore bracelets of pearls, "on seeing which I was much delighted and made many inquiries with the view of learning where they found them. They informed me that they were to be procured in their own neighbourhood and also at a spot to the northward of that place." There are also other references to the pearl-producing centres, and see also Sir Arthur Helps himself, *op. cit.*, p. 74.]

it was more manifest that what is called the "progress of events" was too rapid for the intelligence of men to deal wisely with it, than in these discoveries in America and the West Indies. If the voyages, which were made in four-and-twenty years, could have been extended over a century, it would, to all appearance, have been a singular gain for the whole human family, and not the least for the inhabitants of Africa, who, though not partaking at all in the present struggle, were to pay the largest part of the penalty of defeat.

We might as well, however, expect a child to appreciate danger as that men should see they are going beyond their strength; and, accordingly, it was but natural that the Admiral's enterprize should speedily be followed up by similar undertakings, however inadequate or unfitted these might be for the vast opportunity of peaceful colonization which now presented itself to the Spanish Monarchs.

Alonso de Ojeda, who enjoyed the powerful patronage of Bishop Fonseca, was the next person to traverse the Pearl Coast, but, alas! how different were his objects, and his modes of accomplishing them, from those of the great explorer who preceded him, and who bitterly resented the invasion of his privileges which these minor voyages occasioned. The most noted companions of Ojeda were, a very celebrated pilot of that time, called Juan de la Cosa, and Amerigo Vespucci. Amongst the mariners, there were some who had accompanied Columbus in his third voyage.

Ojeda commenced this voyage on the 18th or 20th of May,¹ in the year 1499, and it embraced the whole of the coast from Surinam, in what is now called Dutch Guyana, to Cape de la Vela.² There is but one thing worthy of note for our purposes in this voyage, and that is, that at

¹ [On 16th May (Fiske, and Weise).]

² [Mr Fiske (*Discovery of America*, ii, p. 93) thinks that land was sighted on the coast of Brazil in 4° or 5° S. This opinion is based on Vespucci's statement, and Ojeda's silence is explained (*op. cit.* p. 94, note). It will be remembered that this was Vespucci's first or second voyage, according to the view taken of his veracity, but there is no doubt that he sailed with Ojeda.]

82 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

Chichiribichi they had a skirmish with the Indians, in which they lost one man, and had twenty others wounded. In the old maps that spot is called the Arrowy Port (*el puerto flechado*), and the feud there may be considered as the beginning of the long and desolating wars between the Spaniards and the natives on the northern coast of South America—wars which for stupid barbarity will ever rank highest amongst the most barbarous follies of the world.

Indeed, this voyage of Ojeda's is every way deplorable. It served to mislead the world at the time, and to give America a name which has ever been felt to imply a great injustice: it has caused great trouble to future critics and historians, who have been at great pains to set right the confused and fallacious (I cannot say false),¹

¹ On this subject there is an astonishing discussion, occupying the fourth volume of HUMBOLDT'S *Examen Critique*, and without having read which, no writer ought to apply an epithet to the name of Amerigo Vespucci. The author of the *Examen* shows the same power of observation and combination in grappling with the boundless details of this obscure matter, as in dealing with natural phenomena. History, bibliography, geography, and even astronomy, enter into this remarkable discussion. The result, as expressed in HUMBOLDT'S own words, is, "Everything seems to me to show that unskilful editors have published, unknown to the Florentine cosmographer, what we possess of his" (*Examen Critique*, iv, p. 283). But he also intimates, throughout the discussion, the necessity there is for great reserve in pronouncing at all upon this difficult matter.

The principal cause of the prevalence of the name America, was the publication, in the year 1507, at the small town of St. Dié in the Vosges, of a work called *Cosmographiæ Introductio cum quibusdam Geometriæ ac Astronomiæ principiis ad eam rem necessariis. Insuper Quatuor Americi Vesputii navigationes*. The author of this work took the name of HYLACOMYLUS. His real name was Martin Waldseemüller.

From the obscure little town of St. Dié the work would easily spread itself, as HUMBOLDT well remarks, into Belgium, France, and Germany; and, indeed, it would be difficult to name any town lying much more centrally to all that was civilized in that age.

The word Amerigo is the same as Amalrich,—"*celui qui endure des labeurs*."

["Faultless ruler," according to another derivation. Of course America was not accepted without protest, which was made even in the Royal Council of State. Among the names proposed for the continent were, *Isabelica*, *Jerisabelica*, *Atlantica*, *Colonia*, *Columbina*, *Iberica*, *Nuevo Mundo*, and *Orbe Carolino*, the last in honour of Charles V.]

narrative of Amerigo Vespucci. Its ill success, far from leading the Spanish court to distrust Ojeda, seems to have made him an object of pity, and to have led to his being employed in those memorable expeditions which ended in the destruction of himself and Nicuesa, as well as of the important provinces which they were sent to govern. It seems as if even the trifling incidents in this voyage were to lead to historical confusion. A statement has been made, that Ojeda encountered some English not far from Venezuela, and this has naturally been made the subject of comment. But, on investigation, it appears that there is no ground that can be relied upon for this statement.¹ The only benefit that has accrued to the world from this expedition is a remarkable map made by the pilot Juan de la Cosa, in the year 1500²—a small offset against the many mischiefs which ensued from this disastrous voyage,—disastrous, as I believe, from the inferior character of one or two of the principal persons engaged in it.

Ojeda's expedition produced very little impression on the public mind in Spain, on account of a voyage which commenced a few days after his, but terminated two months sooner, and which also was a much more memorable expedition. This was undertaken by another celebrated pilot,

¹ See the shrewd remarks in BIDDLE's *Memoir of Sebastian Cabot*, p. 307,—in the spirit of which I entirely agree.

[The first English trader known to have dwelt in the West Indies was Thos. Tyson, in 1526 (Hakluyt, *Voyages*, ii, pt. ii, p. 3, ed. 1599). The first English ship recorded to have visited those regions was one which appeared off San Domingo, in November 1527. The captain told the Spanish officials that he left England with another ship on a voyage of exploration northwards, "to find a strait to pass towards Tartaria," or "to find the territory of the Grand Khan." The other ship had been lost, many of his own men had died, and he had come south for relief (*Col. de Doc. Indd . . . del Arch. de Indias*, xxxvii, p. 556; xl, p. 305). The ship was probably the *Mary Guilford*, under the command of John Rut, who sailed in company with the *Samson* on a voyage of discovery in the preceding June. Herrera gives substantially the same account, but under the erroneous date of 1519.]

² This map was first published by HUMBOLDT, *Examen Critique*, v. [Reproduced in vol. i. of this edition. See also the Introduction.]

84 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

called Pero Alonso Niño, an old companion of Columbus, of whose daring and experience all these mariners now made use, "presuming to take in their hands the thread which the Admiral had shown them."¹ Pero Alonso Niño was a poor man, and on that account was obliged to take into partnership a merchant of the name of Luis Guerra, who insisted upon the command of the expedition being entrusted to a brother of his, named Cristóbal Guerra. His force consisted of but one small caravel of fifty tons, manned by thirty-three men; and the fewness of their numbers proved, I have no doubt, a considerable aid to their success. The rights of the great Admiral were so far respected by the Spanish authorities, that, in their instructions to Alonso Niño, they gave orders that he should not land within fifty leagues of the country which the Admiral had discovered.²

Cristóbal Guerra and Alonso Niño arrived at the coast of Paria fifteen days after Ojeda had touched at the same coast, and continued to pursue the same route as Ojeda had done, and the Admiral before him. On making their way out of the "Boca del Drago," they encountered eighteen canoes, full of Caribs, who did not hesitate to attack them, but whom they succeeded in putting to flight by discharges of artillery. One canoe, with one Carib in it, they captured, and in this they found a captive Indian, bound, who made known to them by signs, what had been the fate of six others, his companions, namely, that they had been devoured by the Caribs.³ He also showed them how these Caribs came to this coast, bringing with them houses in separate planks, which they put together to protect themselves at night, and whence they sallied forth to make their ferocious incursions along the coast of Cumaná.⁴

¹ LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxiii, p. 435.

² [They made the coast of Brazil in about 8° S., and then turned northward (FISKE, *op. cit.* ii, p. 95).]

³ I mention this fact to show that the fact of the Caribs being eaters of men was not an invention of the Spaniards to serve their own purposes, which, as it afterwards proved very convenient to them, might be suspected.

⁴ "They took the precaution to entrench themselves by night within

VOYAGE OF GUERRA, 1499-1500 85

From the Boca del Drago the expedition sailed on westward until they came to Margarita, where they landed, being the first Spaniards who had ever touched at that island. There they procured some pearls in exchange for Spanish goods, if by such a name as "goods" we can dignify the pins, needles, glass beads, little bells, and hatchets, which were the customary merchandize for traffic with the new-found Indians.

From thence they passed on to the coast of Curianá, which embraces the province of Cumaná,¹ and that of Maracapána.

The expedition now entered a port which they compared to Cadiz.² This port is conjectured to have been that of Mochima or Manera. It would be very difficult to determine now what port it really was, but there is no doubt that it was on the Pearl Coast, from reasons which will shortly be manifest.

In and near this port the expedition tarried for no less than three months; and, accordingly, we have a brief, but still a most valuable, description of the natives, which will really serve to extend our knowledge of the aborigines of that part of the continent.

Cristóbal Guerra and Alonso Niño were received most amicably. At the spot where they landed there were only seven or eight cottages, but about fifty naked men with an Indian Cacique came down to the shore, and begged Alonso Niño, with all signs of cordiality (*Nignum amicé amplectentes*), that he would come on to their *pueblo*, which was situated a league further westward. An immediate exchange of property was made between the Christians and the Indians; bells and beads being readily bartered for the strings of pearls which the Indians had on their arms and necks. In an hour, fifteen ounces weight of pearls were exchanged for trifles

a palisade of stakes they brought with them, whence they issued to commit their wicked deeds."—*Third Voyage of Columbus*.—NAVARRETE, *Coleccion*, iii, p. 12.

¹ Great mistakes have occurred in the early historians, Las Casas and Peter Martyr, from confounding this Curianá with another district of the same name in the vicinity of Coro, near Venezuela.—See NAVARRETE, who has given a very carefully-considered account of this important voyage.—*Coleccion*, iii, p. 13.

² PETER MARTYR, *De Orbe Novo*, dec. 1.

86 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

which cost in Spain two hundred maravedis¹—one of the most profitable transactions that was ever entered into by any company of merchants.²

The next day the expedition weighed anchor and moved onwards to the friendly *pueblo*, from whence the embassy had come to entreat their landing. Naturally, the whole population moved down to the water-side to see the strange men and still stranger ship. The Indians invited the Spaniards to land; but when these latter saw a great multitude of people, and reflected that they were but thirty-three in number, and that treachery was not a thing unknown even in Christian countries, they did not venture to trust themselves in the power of their new friends, but invited them to come on board the vessel. The Indians did not hesitate in the least to do this, but manning their canoes, came at once on board without any signs of fear, bringing with them what pearls they had to offer in exchange for the glittering trifles from Castille. Reassured by the gentleness and simplicity of the Indians, the Spaniards had no further doubts about landing, and when they did land, they met with the most gracious reception, as if it were a meeting of parents and children, instead of one between persons who (if they could claim kindred at all), must carry up the genealogy for thousands of years. The houses were built of wood, being thatched with palm-leaves. Every kind of food was abundant,—fish, flesh, fowls, and bread made of the Indian corn. The game which the Spaniards saw convinced them that they were upon a continent, for nothing of the kind had been seen in the islands.³ This country was evidently more civilized in some respects than the islands which had hitherto been discovered, for markets and fairs were established, to which the inhabitants of each *pueblo* brought what they had to sell. Amongst other articles

¹ Equivalent to about one shilling and twopence.

² "Those that they gave only in about an hour weighed fifteen ounces; the value of what was given them in return was about two hundred maravedis."—LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxiii, p. 437.

³ "They thought it certain that they were on a continent from seeing different kinds of deer and game, as these animals had not been seen to that time in the Islands."—LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxiii, p. 438.

which the Spaniards observed, and which were probably offered to themselves for sale, were jars, pitchers, dishes, porringers, and other vessels of various forms.¹ These things, which we would now give so much for, as significant of the state of art in that nation and as affording some clue to their origin, were valueless in the eyes of the Spaniards; but amongst the other articles for sale were some objects which attracted the immediate attention of all the mariners. Such were ornaments of gold, made in the form of little birds, frogs, and other figures, very well wrought. These attractive ornaments, however, were not parted with in the same facile manner that the pearls had been; and, in general, it was remarked that in matters of bargain these Indians haggled in the same manner as, according to Peter Martyr, women in the Old World are wont to do.² Of the women in these parts it is mentioned, that they were chiefly employed in domestic affairs and agriculture, while the men were engaged in war, in hunting, and in their solemn dances. Domestic³ animals were kept and tended by the women in the same way as by the women in Spain. One very ludicrous thing occurred in the bartering between the Spaniards and these Indians. Part of the Spanish cargo consisted of the humble, but—in the Old World—useful articles called pins and needles. The drapery, however, of these Indians being of the scantiest description, and being, for the most part, omitted altogether, the precise use to them of these pins and needles was not very obvious. The Spaniards replied very craftily to inquiries upon this head, that the use of these pins and needles was to get out thorns from the flesh, and, as prickly plants abounded on that coast, more, perhaps, than anywhere in the world, the tide of commerce turned directly, and pins and needles were in the highest demand.

The golden ornaments, before mentioned, were signifi-

¹ "They brought for sale large earthen jars, pitchers, pots, dishes, porringers, and other vessels of various shapes used in their domestic life."—LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxiii, p. 438.

² "Among themselves not otherwise in their bargainings do they dispute, differ, repeat themselves, and exaggerate than happens among our women when bargaining."—PETER MARTYR, *De Orbe Novo*, dec. i.

³ "Ducks and geese are kept in the care of the women as by ours."—PETER MARTYR, *De Orbe Novo*, dec. i.

88 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

cant of a much more extended commerce than a merely local one. They were at a high price, because they came from a country which was six days distant from Curianá. It was thus that these Indians reckoned distances, and in this way that they answered when asked by the Spaniards, anxiously, though with seeming carelessness, where that "yellow dirt" came from? On being further asked the name of the place, they said it was called Cauchieto, and, according to this reckoning of six days, it would be forty-two leagues off,—an Indian travelling generally about seven leagues a day.

To Cauchieto, then, Alonso Niño and Cristóbal Guerra directed the course of their vessel, taking leave of their friends at Curianá, from whom they had met with nothing but kindness and hospitality.¹ Nor at Cauchieto did the Spanish mariners fail to experience the like good offices at the hands of the natives, who received them as if they had been their brothers. The only distrust which these Indians manifested of the Spaniards was in the care with which they kept their wives and daughters out of sight of the strangers; but they themselves shortly became so familiar with the Spaniards, that they were in and out of the ship, at all hours of the day and night.² Here pearls were dear, and gold was cheap; but it did not turn out to be of fine quality, or in great abundance.

The expedition proceeded onwards, anchoring in the various ports and bays which there are on that coast, until it came to a very beautiful spot near a river, where there were not only houses, but places of fortification. There were also gardens of such beauty that one of the voyagers, afterwards giving evidence in a lawsuit connected with the proceedings on that coast, declared that he had never seen a more delicious spot. The Indians here, however, were not friendly, and appeared in a body of one or two thousand men, armed with clubs, and bows and arrows, ready to oppose any landing of the Spaniards.

¹ "He found them to be gentle, simple, innocent, and hospitable."—PETER MARTYR, *De Orbe Novo*, dec. 1.

² "They never ceased their coming and going day and night, some entering, others leaving, with great gladness, security, and satisfaction."—LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxiii, p. 438.

RESULTS OF PEARL TRANSACTIONS 89

This is supposed, and with some reason, to have been Chichiribichi, where Alonso de Ojeda had already had a skirmish with the Indians, and, therefore, had prepared them for giving an ill reception to any of his countrymen who should come that way. How important it is that the first communications with the natives of newly discovered lands should be friendly. This unexpected demeanour of the natives was considered very strange, but will not be thought so by any one who knows the career of Ojeda, a man totally and absolutely unfit for that nice diplomacy clothed in a frank and fearless bearing, which is more needful in dealing with half-civilized men than with the most refined courts of ancient countries.

The Spaniards then returned to their friends at Curianá, where they found a new supply of pearls ready for them, of the finest quality, and of the largest size, many of them being as big as filberts, though very badly strung, as the Indians had no good instruments to work with, being deficient in iron. The Spaniards and Indians parted good friends, each thinking that they had made very good bargains. The pearls weighed a hundred and fifty marks,¹ and had cost about ten or twelve ducats.

This expedition quitted that coast in February 1500, and after a difficult passage of sixty-one days, reached Bayona, in Galicia, the mariners being laden with pearls as if they were carrying bundles of straw.² It cannot be doubted but that the news of this remarkable voyage must have spread quickly all over Spain and Hispaniola, and have determined the immediate occupation of the whole of the Pearl Coast. Cubagua was found to be the natural seat of the pearl fishery; and that little island, which had never been inhabited by the Indians on account of its sterility, and the entire absence of any fresh water, was occupied by the Spaniards, and a town built there, to which the name of New Cadiz was given. Such was the

¹ OVIEDO estimates the pearls at fifty marks, and says that they were good, but small, not one of them weighing as much as five carats (çinco quilates).—*Hist. Gen. y Nat.*, lib. 1, cap. 1.

² "They came home at last, the seamen as burdened with pearls as if they had been straws."—PETER MARTYR, *De Orbe Novo*, dec. 1.

90 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

pressure of commercial transactions, that an old writer likens the bustle and movement in the town to the play of fire amidst dry branches,¹ and gives a list of the sumptuous houses that were built there.²

- ¹ “ Con tal hervor y tal desasosiego
Cuanto por secas ramas vivo fuego.”

—JUAN DE CASTELLANOS, *Elegías de Varones Ilustres de Indias*, primera parte, elegía 13, canto 1.

- ² “ Fué la de Barrionuevo la primera,
Un escudero natural de Soria,
Fué luego la de Joan de la Barrera,
Cuyo valor es digno de memoria ;
Y luego la de Pedro de Herrera
De quien pudiera yo tejer historia,
Y la de Castellanos, tesorero,
Que fué de los mejores el primero.”

—CASTELLANOS, *Elegías*, prim. part., elegía 13, canto 1.

CHAPTER V

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE RELIGIONS OF THE NEW WORLD —AN IMAGINARY VOYAGE

THE expedition of Alonso Niño and Cristóbal Guerra, which was narrated in the preceding chapter, is important, not only as giving us an insight into the primitive ways and manners of the Indians of the Pearl Coast, but also because it clearly shows how well they might have been managed by means of purely commercial expeditions. This enterprise was so completely mercantile, that we learn from it nothing but what an observant merchant would have told us, who did not go beyond his trade. Not a word is said of the laws, the social customs, or the religion, of the Indians on the Pearl Coast. But, fortunately, from other sources we are able to ascertain what was their religion, which indeed may chiefly be described by negatives. Columbus testifies that they had none.¹ Amerigo Vespucci says (and I am convinced that his words relate to what took place in Ojeda's first expedition² to the Pearl Coast), that they did not perceive any sacrifices, nor any places of worship; and he likens the life and tenets of the Indians he saw to those of the ancient Epicureans.³ Another authority of later date, but of much larger experience and cognizance of this particular subject, describes the religion of the

¹ "The Admiral says that they had no knowledge of any doctrine."—NAVARRETE, *Coleccion*, iii, p. 211, note.

² See the minute comparison in the *Examen Critique*, iv, between the facts of Vespucci's first voyage and what we know, from authentic sources, of Ojeda's.

³ "Because we did not perceive that they made any sacrifices or had any places or houses of prayer, I judge their lives to be wholly sensuous, an Epicurean existence."—*Viages de Vesputio*.—NAV., *Col.*, iii, p. 211.

92 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

inhabitants of the whole of the Pearl Coast as being of the least formal and established character.¹

I do not know that an attempt which I have made to bring into one view the religions of the various nations and tribes discovered by the Spaniards and Portuguese can be more fitly introduced at any juncture in this history than the present. The leading idea of Las Casas was eminently religious: it will be well, therefore, to form some general notion of what he and others had to contend against, or to act with, in the religious creeds and observances of the natives of America. The great difficulty in historical writing is to present anything which shall contain a great many facts, and yet be possible to be remembered; and it is not beneath the writers, or the readers, to avail themselves of any mode of classifying and arranging facts, which does not falsify them or place them in unreal positions.

Vessels have often been sent out, at least in our own times, for some particular object, other than the usual ones of conquest or of commerce; and if we may imagine a vessel to have been sent out by the pious Monarch of Spain for the purpose of investigating the religious rites and opinions of the various nations in the New World, it would have been very curious and instructive to read the account of the voyage given in the log book, and to study the report, brought home by the captain, of the religious aspect of the various coasts. It is supposed that there were voyages of which no record was kept in the books at Cadiz, or at Seville (*viages incógnitos* they are called); and some such voyage we will imagine whether made by official command, or by the secret enterprise of private individuals. It shall be in the *Santa Flor*, a vessel carrying two hundred men, and having on board some of the companions of Columbus, Ojeda, Pinzon, and Vespucci. I do not like to be too precise about the date (dates are very dangerous things for a fictitious

¹ "Neither idol nor temple has been seen, nor are any of these races believed to have or to have had any. They have only priests who teach them the doctrine of Satan, taught by this cunning and powerful enemy."—TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. 6, cap. 33.

THE VOYAGE OF THE *SANTA FLOR* 93

narrative), but it shall have started some time after the occupation of Cuba, and before the conquest of Mexico.

Years have passed by since the time of those voyages of Columbus, Ojeda, Cristóbal Guerra, and Alonso Niño, commemorated in the preceding chapter. The early discoverers are reaping their rewards of poverty and neglect. Cortes is a young man deep in debt and in intrigue. Pizarro — nobody thinking much of him — is doing the work of a second-rate soldier, in a stern, creditable manner. Las Casas is on some of his journeys, or fighting his way at court; and, if at court, he is writing memorials all the morning, besieging audience-rooms in the afternoon, and dignifying the life of an applicant by the entire unselfishness of his objects. Pedro de Córdova, Antonio Montesino, and other monks are praying, and preaching, and doing all that in them lies, to keep the name of Christ before the Spaniards, and to introduce it, with some hope of its being received, to the notice of the Indians in Hispaniola and on the Pearl Coast.

In the Old World things are proceeding much as usual. Princes are warring or intriguing for possessions, which they will not know how to administer when they have gained them, and which will be an addition to their titles and a diminution of their strength. Nowhere is the discovery of the New World thought much of, except, perhaps, by a few learned men, who, it may be observed in all ages, appreciate the great changes of the world more readily than most of those persons who are considered eminently practical, and are versed in affairs. But the learned have practized their imagination, and are accustomed to look a long way off. Besides, on the other hand, we must not suppose that the discovery of the New World presented the same appearance to the statesmen of that day that it does to us. The original and guiding error of Columbus continued for a long time to beset them. In the books, or rather little pamphlets,¹

¹ See such titles as *Von den Newen Insulen und landen so yetz kürzlich erfunden seynd durch den kunigh von Portigal*. Leipsik, 1506.

94 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

which were published at that time, the new lands did not always gain the great name of New World (which, I suppose, they owe to Peter Martyr); and certainly with princes and statesmen, these great discoveries were often but a way to the Spice Islands, and the land discovered but the westernmost part of Asia—a country they already knew sufficiently about.

Then, again, there was that invariable cause for men's indifference to great things, which has been alluded to before, namely, the presence close to their eyes, of the petty and personal affairs of their own place and time, which leaves but a small residue of attention applicable to anything that does not press to be thought about, or done, immediately.

It is not surprising, therefore, especially when the peculiarly troubled state of Europe at that period is taken into consideration, that the discovery of the New World did not at once absorb all that attention which its importance demanded. How much it did obtain—how much more, I imagine, than has hitherto been supposed—has been seen, and will continue to be shown, in these pages.

Accordingly, the *Santa Flor* not being fitted to receive slaves, nor intended to bring back gold and pearls, may have glided out very quietly from San Lucar, the rest of the population being intent upon their own business, and talking, when they had spare time, of the designs of France, or the schemes of Venice, or of that sure ally and sound theologian, the King of England.

The mariners of the *Santa Flor* would not have departed without confessing, and receiving the Sacrament. This done they take their departure; and without any difficulty (for they have good charts on board, and, amongst other maps, that of Juan de la Cosa) they steer straight for Trinidad, and then round the south coast of that island, through the "Strait of the Serpent," at which point their investigations commence. Approaching Paria—the earthly Paradise of Columbus,—however careful a lookout was kept, no idol and no temple would be seen. Here they find anchorage.

BEAUTY OF THE COAST OF PARIA 95

By night, sweet odours,¹ varying with every hour² of the watch, were wafted from the shore to the vessel lying near; and the forest trees, brought together by the serpent tracery of myriads of strange parasitical plants, might well seem to the fancy like some great design of building, over which the lofty palms, a forest upon a forest,³ appeared to present a new order of architecture. In the background rose the mist, like incense. These, however, were but the evening fancies of the mariner, who had before him fondly in his mind the wreathed pillars of the cathedral of Burgos, or the thousand-columned Christian mosque of Cordova, or the perfect fane of Seville; and when the moon rose, or the innumerable swarms of luminous insects swept across the picture, it was but a tangled forest after all, wherein the shaping hand of man had made no memorial to his Creator.

Occasionally, grand and elaborate dances of men would be visible through the trees; but whether these were meant to express joy, or sorrow, or devotion, would be moot points with the mariners. The voyage is recommenced. They sail by the sandy shore of Araya, see the lofty cocoa-nut trees that stand over Cumaná, pursue their way along that beautiful coast, noticing the Piritú palm

¹ "The shore of Paria is scented by so many sweet and most grateful odours that not without cause it might be thought the true country of the renewal of youth."—CORNELIUS WYTFLIET, *Descriptionis Ptolemaicae Augmentum*, p. 141.

² "Every quarter of an hour different balsamic odours fill the air, and other flowers alternately unfold their leaves to the night, and almost overpower the senses with their perfume."—*Travels in Brazil in the Years 1817-1820*. By Dr. JOHN BAPT. VON SPIX, and Dr. C. F. PHIL. VON MARTIUS, i, book 2, chap. 1.

³ "If I might yield here to the charm of memory, I would dwell on scenes deeply imprinted on my own recollection—on the calm of the tropic nights, when the stars, not sparkling, as in our climates, but shining with a steady beam, shed on the gently heaving ocean a mild and planetary radiance;—or I would recall those deep wooded valleys of the Cordilleras, where the palms shoot through the leafy roof formed by the thick foliage of other trees, above which their lofty and slender stems appear in lengthened colonnades, 'a forest above a forest.'"—"This expression is taken from a beautiful description of tropical forest scenery by BERNARDIN DE ST. PIERRE, in *Paul and Virginia*,"—HUMBOLDT's *Kosmos*, i, p. 7, and note.

96 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

at Maracápána, then traverse the difficult waters of the gloomy Golfo Triste, pass the province of Venezuela, catch a glimpse of the white summits of the mountains above Santa Martha, continue on their course to Darien, now memorable for the failure of so many great enterprizes—and still no temple, no great idol, no visible creed, no *cultus*.¹

Accustomed to a land at home where every height, seen dimly in the distance, might prove a cathedral tower, a church spire, a pilgrim's oratory, or at least a wayside cross, these religious explorers must often have strained their sight in order to recognize some object of a similar character. But on nearing the coast, and bringing dubious objects clearly into view, they would

¹ "Leaving the western and northern parts of the Indies and passing to the south, we arrive at the coast we call Pária, and all along there, as in all these parts, the people have a little more or a little less in the way of religion, having some similar idols and gods. But in general they claim to have one common to all, and that is the sun, but no temple."—LAS CASAS, *Hist. Apologética*, MS., cap. 124.

The *Historia Apologética* is another of the large works written by the indefatigable Las Casas, which repose in manuscript. It aims at giving an ample account of the manners, laws, and religion of the Indians in the New World. The leading idea of it, as appeared to me from a cursory and partial examination, is to repel all attacks against the Indian races by counter-attacks upon other races, especially those which are celebrated in the world's history.* If it must be admitted that the Mexicans were guilty of bloody and numerous sacrifices, still what does not Trogu Pompeius confess with respect to similar practices amongst the early Greeks and Romans? Such is the course of argument, not quite so briefly given, that Las Casas adopts in this elaborate work, which is enriched and confused by abundant quotations.

The above is a line of reasoning, just in itself, and very naturally adopted, in a pedantic age, by a man whose greatest enterprizes had often been hindered, or cut short, by the shameful and unjust prejudices, entertained on the part of the learned, against that unfortunate race whose cause he was advocating.

He is occasionally led by his advocacy into making rather rude remarks about modern nations, as may be seen from the following passage:—"They are included also among the second (kinds of barbarous races) for three reasons, the one in regard to the want of learning and rudeness of speech (ó de literal loqucion), like the English."—*Hist. Apol.*, Epílogo.

The copy of the *Apologética* which I have consulted is to be found in the splendid collection of MSS. of Sir Thomas Phillipps, Bart., of Middle Hill, to whose courtesy I am much indebted.

find nothing but symmetrical aloe or the beds of prickly cactus, like fortresses, on the sea-shore; or if they ventured further inwards, and entered upon the interminable *llanos*, they beheld nothing but a wide waste, like the track of a great conqueror, herbless and treeless, save where some withered-looking palms offered a light and mocking shade, standing up rarer than the masts of lone vessels on great seas.

From Darien to Panamá,—from Panamá to Nicaragua,—and still nothing¹ to remind them of religion, unless it were the beauty of nature, and the town of Nombre de Dios, so named by Nicuesa in his extremity. Still, if they had landed, they might have found amongst the natives the knowledge that there was One God, and that some sort of sacrifices were offered up to him.²

Soon, however, in sailing northwards, white buildings would be seen amidst the trees bearing some likeness to truncated pyramids, and, in the setting sun, dark figures would be seen against the horizon on the tops of these pyramids, from whose gestures it would be sadly and reluctantly admitted by the horror-stricken crew that they were looking upon that affront to Heaven, a human sacrifice. Then some of the crew would be heard to regret (though it would be called a false

¹ I think the following remarks of Las Casas apply to this part of the coast:—"They have no idols, but some things of clay, and these they do not adore as gods but only for the imaginary power attributed to them by the priests (and by the priests to the Devil) that they could confer some benefits, such as giving them sons, and sending rain and other such useful gifts; . . . they have no formal ceremonial observances, but a few trifling ones, and these exercised by the priests."—*Hist. Apologética*, cap. 120.

² "They had some knowledge of a true God, and that there was one who dwelt in Heaven, who in the language of these Darien tribes was called Chicuhna, which means the 'Beginning of all things.' To him they had recourse in all their troubles, begging assistance, and to him they offered their sacrifices."—TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. 6, cap. 33.

[Mr. H. H. Bancroft (*Native Races*, iii, p. 498) says that the most prominent personage among the races inhabiting the Isthmus "was Dabaiba, a goddess who controlled the thunder and lightning and with their aid devastated the lands of those who displeased her." There was a temple to her at Urabá. Mr Bancroft, and other writers, find evidence of widespread Phallic Worship in America.]

98 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

philosophy by others) the poor and meagre religion of the natives of the Pearl Coast, where there were no temples and no statues; and where, when they landed, they found no *cultus* beyond that pertaining to witchcraft.¹

Again, a long extent of low-lying coast with dense forests coming down to the water's edge, but no signs of temples or of worship,² until the bay of Honduras is entered by these religious explorers, when lo! they come upon some buried city, buried so long ago, that huge trees have risen amongst its ruins, and gigantic parasites have twisted their lithe arms around columns, and thrown their shoots along peristyles, playing with the strange faces in stone, overshadowing winged symbols of power³ and sacrificial instruments, and embracing the carved imagery of fruits and flowers, their kindred.⁴

¹ [In Nicaragua there were two or three supreme gods and many subordinate ones. "In Nicaragua proper they adored Tomaoteot, 'the great God,' whose son, Teotbilche, was sent down to mankind. This looks like another Christ-myth, especially when we read of attendant angels who had wings and flew about in heaven." (H. H. Bancroft, *Native Races*, iii, p. 492.) Boys and girls were brought up to be sacrificed, and were supposed to become deified after death. Confession was practised, but not to priests, and penance imposed.]

² [The races on the Mosquito coast acknowledged a good spirit for whom they had no definite name, and to whom they rendered no worship. Their only religious ceremonies were the conjurations of their *Sukias*, or sorceresses. They believed in local spirits of rivers, hills, caves, etc. (Bancroft, *op. cit.* iii, p. 497.)]

³ See, for example, the ruins of Ocosingo.—STEPHENS'S *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan*, ii, p. 259.

⁴ "On the left bank of the river Montagua, in the lands called Quirigua, about six leagues from the town of Yzabal, on the Gulf of Dulce, there are some remains of antiquity, that, were they better known, would excite the admiration of archæologists. They consist of seven quadrilateral columns, from twelve to twenty-five feet high, and three to five feet at the bases, as they now stand; four pieces of an irregularly oval figure, twelve feet by ten or eleven feet, not unlike sarcophagi; and two other pieces, large square slabs, seven and a half feet by three feet, and more than three feet thick. All are of stone resembling the primitive sandstone, and, except the slabs, are covered on all sides with sculptured devices, among which are many heads of men and women, animals, foliage, and fanciful figures, all elaborately wrought in a style of art and good finish that cause surprise on inspecting them closely. The columns appear to be of one piece, having each side entirely covered with the figures in relief. The

No living creatures, but the animals which have retaken their own, are to be seen there; and none remain to tell by word or gesture the meaning of the mounds of stone which for miles around render the burthened earth uneven and difficult to the amazed explorers, who return to their vessel with that involuntary respect for the new country which great antiquity engenders in the minds of all men, especially in those of the pious and learned, to whom, strange to say, the past is always more of a home for thought than the future. These do not forget the object of their mission, and note with care the buildings which seem to have been devoted to religion, and, seeing the ruins of pyramids, cannot divest themselves of the idea that these buildings have been sacred to no good purpose, and that the city has been condemned of God for its inhuman and bloody idolatries. If the religious explorers had the courage to make their way into the country, they came upon a people whose religious traditions must have reminded them of the fallen angels of sacred, and the Titans of classic story, which told of the rebellious nature of the elder children of a great deity, who had sought to create for themselves, and whose impious attempts had resulted in the production of common household things,—cups, and jars, and cooking vessels; while their younger brethren, strong in their humility, were permitted to create man.¹

whole have sustained so little injury from time or atmospheric corrosion, that, when cleared from an incrustation of dirt and moss, they show the lines perfect and well defined. Evidently they are the performances of a skilful and ingenious people, whose history has been lost probably for ages, or rather centuries.”—BAILY’S *Cent. America*, p. 65.

[Nothing is known of the history of the ruins at Quirigua, and they have no traditions. They are not very far from the ruins at Copan, spoken of in vol. iii of this work.]

¹ “Then concerning creation they have this belief. They say that previously to it there was neither heaven nor earth, neither sun, moon, nor stars. They believe that there existed a divine husband and wife called *Hehel Itcaurma* (I am not by any means sure of this reading of the MS. as regards the two last words). These had father and mother who bore thirteen sons; the eldest, with some of the others, becoming puffed up with pride, sought to make human beings, against the will of their parents, but failed because all that they created resulted in common household things such as jugs and pots and the like. The

100 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

The crew of the *Santa Flor* resume their voyage, and still steering northwards, come to the mysterious island of Cozumel, where they are in no doubt about the horrors which take place in the way of human sacrifices; and the beauty of all the buildings they see around them is repulsive in their sight. Little are these good men consoled by seeing the carved likeness of a cross in this island; and they moralize on the power of the Evil One, who is allowed for a time to indulge in mockeries and mummeries of sacred things.

Round the dry plains of Merida the vessel makes its way, and then across the Bay of Campeché to what will be Vera Cruz; and, wherever they catch a glimpse of land, they make out in the far distance those truncated pyramids which have already caused them so much horror.

Abandoning their vessel, these intrepid explorers move across the grand plateau of "New Spain" as it will be called, beholding the vast pyramids, of Egyptian form and magnitude, which were the boast and the delight of Cholula, Tapantla, and Mexico, then called Temixtitan. Shuddering, when they behold the unkempt priests, and hear, from afar off, the dreadful tones of the Mexican *teponastli*,¹ our travellers creep onwards no longer in any

younger sons, who were named Huncheven and Hunahan, begged leave from their father and mother to create Man, and permission was granted them with a promise of success because they had been submissive. So they first created heaven and the planets, then air, water, and earth; then, they say, that out of the earth man and woman were shaped. The others who had proudly presumed to create against the will of their parents were cast into torment."—LAS CASAS, *Hist. Apologética*, MS., cap. 235.

[Modern research gives *Xchmel* and *Ximana* in place of *Hehel Iltaurma*, and the thirteen sons of the MS. used by Sir Arthur Helps is a mistake for three sons. In 1857 the *Popol Vuh*, or national book of the Quichés, dealing with the Guatemalan cosmogony and beliefs, was first brought to the notice of inquirers. The author devotes a short appendix to it in vol. iv.]

¹ A drum used in solemn sacrifices.

[The numerous gods of Yucatan were nearly all deified kings and heroes. There were three great centres of worship, Chichen, Izamal, and—the greatest—Cozumel. Mr. H. H. Bancroft describes the temple at Cozumel as "a square tower of considerable size within which was the gigantic terra-cotta statue of Ahulneb." This statue was hollow, and was used as an oracle, and "so famous did this oracle

doubt of the nature of the sacrifices which those barbaric sounds announce—sacrifices reminding the more learned amongst them of the superstitions of ancient Rome, with all the minute inspection and parade of the creature sacrificed.

Stopping to investigate the mighty city of Temixtitan, the scientific explorers are confounded at discovering so much knowledge of the stars, the nicest measurement of time, with great skill and adroitness in the mechanical arts, wise laws, even refined manners, in a spot which they now look upon as the headquarters of a most blood-thirsty and thoroughly established idolatry. The wise men of this expedition, with all their experience at home, have not yet become accustomed to an assured fact in human life,—namely, that the utmost cleverness and sagacity in one direction may co-exist with the utmost abandonment of thought in another.

Once, being detained in a dense crowd in the square of the great temple, whither our explorers had gone disguised in Mexican costume, they become unwilling spectators of a human sacrifice. At first, they see six priests, five of them clothed in white, and the sixth, or chief priest, in red, and otherwise richly attired. Inquiring his name, they are answered, Tezcatlipuk, or Huitzilopochtli, and are astonished, knowing these to be the names of Mexican divinities, and not being aware that the chief priest assumed for the day the name of the god who was honoured by the sacrifice.¹

Scanning this group of priests more closely, the Spanish explorers discover that the priests are carrying to the upper area of the temple the body of a naked and living man. The long flights of steps are slowly mounted, and the unfortunate victim placed upon a large, convex, green

become, and so great was the multitude of pilgrims continually flocking to it, that it was found necessary to construct roads leading from the chief cities of Yucatan, and even from Tabasco and Guatemala."

The first cross seen by the Spaniards, made of lime and stone, was at Cozumel. For the various traditions of its introduction into America, see Bancroft (*Native Races*, iii, p. 467); it will be remembered that the cross is much older than Christianity as a religious emblem.]

¹ The victim on some occasions also represented the Delti to whom the sacrifice was made, which seems to indicate a great mystery.

stone. Four of the attendant priests hold him down by the arms and legs, while a fifth places a wooden instrument, of a serpent form, across his throat. The convex altar raises the body of the victim into an arched shape, and enables the chief priest to make, with more facility, the fatal incision, and to remove the heart of the victim.¹

The heart was then presented to the idol, being laid within his uncouth hand, or placed upon his altar.

It was a beautiful day on which I imagine the pious explorers to have been witnesses of this dread scene. The emeralds worn by the chief priest glittered in the sun; and his feathers fluttered lightly in the breeze. The bright pyramidal temples were reflected in the lake and in a thousand minor mirrors formed by the enclosed waters in the water-streets. A busy, pleasant noise from the adjacent market-place was heard throughout the great square. The victim had uttered no sound. He knew the inutility of any outcry. In Mexico, priests, victims, and people, were alike accustomed to view such ceremonies, and this was one of the ordinary sacrifices.² The expression of the faces in the crowd was calm and almost self-satisfied. All around was beautiful and serene, and it was hardly until the mangled body, hurled down from

¹ "This man, condemned and prepared for death, being in this condition of torment and pain, fastened hand, foot, and throat, the Chief Priest comes with a knife or razor and opens the breast largely, with so much quickness that his action could hardly be seen or heard so great was his skill and method. He then took out the heart, and, grovelling low, showed it to the Sun, to which he offered it hot and steaming; then turning towards the Idol, brought the heart to the threshold of its chapel on the outside, and there made a blood-stain with it. The heart, being put on the ground and taken up again, was put in a highly-painted vessel made of a gourd called Xicalli. This was put before the altar, being an offering to the Idol of the noblest part of the dead body whose soul it had held."—TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. 7, cap. 19. For a full account of these ceremonies, see CLAVIGERO'S *Hist. of Mexico*, English translation, book vi, section 18.

² [The number of human beings annually sacrificed in Mexico is uncertain. Las Casas gives a low number; Zumárraga says twenty thousand a year in the city of Mexico alone. Four authors, but all Spanish or Hispaniolized Indians, say that from 70,000 to 80,000 human sacrifices were offered up at the consecration of one temple.]

the upper area of the temple, had come near to the feet of the astounded voyagers, that they could believe they had really seen what passed before their eyes. Without saying a word to each other, they withdrew from the great square, and are no more seen in the streets of Mexico that day. If the passion for research did not suffice to conquer all disgust, they would, doubtless, have quitted the city on that evening; but a strange fascination retains them within its walls, and they regard, with still greater curiosity than ever, the marks of high civilization and careful polity, which were to be seen in every district of that vast and unholy metropolis of the Aztecs.

It is not always, however, the natural disgust of humane men at witnessing bloody idolatries that the pious voyagers experience while staying in the great city, or passing across the lofty table lands of Mexico. Occasionally, their disgust at cruelty is changed into a devout horror, or an almost unwilling admiration, when they perceive, in this Mexican religion, words, phrases, ideas and ceremonies which remind them of all they have been taught to venerate in their own religion. They stop before the great dark idol, called Tezcatlipuk,¹ the god, they are told, of penitence, of jubilees, and of the pardon of sins.

¹ "There was another principal idol in Mexico, the god of penitence, jubilees, and pardons for their sins. This idol was called Tezcatlipuca, and made of a black, very shining, stone-like jet, and covered with fine ornaments after their manner. It had earrings of gold and silver, and through the lower lip a small tube of crystal six inches long, in which was put sometimes a green feather and sometimes lapis lazuli, which made it look like an emerald or a turquoise. The ends of the hair were bound by a band of burnished gold, and from it was hung an ear of gold with smoke wreaths painted thereon, which signified the prayers of the afflicted and of sinners that he heard when they implored his protection. Between this ear and the other hung a number of locks of hair. At his neck was suspended a jewel of gold, so large that it covered all the stomach, upon both arms bracelets of gold, at his navel a rich green stone; and in his left hand a fan of precious feathers of green, azure, and yellow, which sprung forth from a plate of gold, shining and highly burnished like a looking-glass, which signified that within that looking-glass he saw all that was done in the world. They called this mirror or plate of gold Itlacheaya, meaning his glass to look into. In his right hand he held four arrows, signifying the punishment he inflicted on the wicked for their sins."—ACOSTA, *Hist. Natural y Moral de las Indias*, lib. 5, cap. 9.

They look up at his large golden ear, with wreaths of smoke depicted upon it, which, they are told, are meant to signify the prayers of the afflicted that are addressed to him. They are dazzled by the plate of burnished gold in his left hand, in which, they are informed, lie mirrored the deeds of the whole world, and they learn with satisfaction that the arrows in his right hand signify the punishments which he inflicts upon the wicked.

The more they investigate, the more they find of strange resemblances to their own religion. They marvel at the dexterity, and shudder at the audacity, with which the Evil One has imitated¹ the sacraments and the usages of the Catholic Church. A few of the more thoughtful amongst these explorers, when they consider these startling resemblances, conclude with justice, that such things either manifest great laws of the mind, developing themselves alike in various races of the human family, however differently situated; or that they offer indications of much descent yet untraced, and much history yet hidden from the world; and, in either case, that these resemblances afford worthy material for the most diligent research.

Throughout these investigations, one subject of surprise impresses itself upon their minds,—namely, how the Indians themselves are induced to bear the tyranny of this idolatry. The explorers venture by degrees to intimate this question, the terms of which are not even understood, or seem not to be, by the greater part of those to whom they address themselves, though from one faithful guide they learn with delight, that there are men, who, like himself, are wearied by the hard things which these false gods impose upon

¹ See the following chapters in ACOSTA, *Hist. Nat. y Moral de las Indias*:—Lib. 5, cap. 23. How the Devil has worked to imitate the Sacraments of Holy Church. Cap. 24. In what manner, in Mexico, the Devil has worked to imitate the feast of the Holy Sacrament and Communion used in Holy Church. Cap. 25. Of confessors and confession that the Indians used. Cap. 26. Of the abominable unction that the Mexican priests and other nations used, and of their divinations. [There were also religious orders.]

Even the mode of sustaining the priests must have reminded the explorers of similar usages at home. "There was (in New Spain) what in our churches we call 'Chapter revenues,' that is to say, certain lands and hereditaments dedicated by the Kings and lords to the support of the temples."—LAS CASAS, *Hist. Apologetica*, cap, 141.

them, and who have long been thinking of flying to some other creed.¹

The expedition, with great pain and labour, construct a new *Santa Flor*, and take ship again at the port of Acapulco; and now steering southward, they reach a land, where, though they see great edifices, they happily find a less severe superstition, and fewer buildings dedicated to unholy purposes, than they had left in Mexico.

Soon they discern no buildings and no temples; and when they land, as they do in the Bay of Panamá, they find that they have returned to a ruder and more primitive race of men. Slowly, along the beautiful shores of the mild Pacific, the vessel makes its labouring way, when of a sudden the evening sun is reflected from vast buildings of a stately aspect, but of a different character from any they have yet beheld. This time the pious explorers are rejoiced to behold none of those "accursed" pyramids, — for so the sailors, seldom choice in their language, are wont to call them. Our explorers are anticipating Pizarro in his discovery of Tumbez.

On they go, still preceding that intrepid discoverer, along a coast thickly inhabited, and adorned with what wise men would most desire to see in a new country, magnificent roads. The expedition, mindful of its chief intent, still seeks to ascertain the religion of the natives; and in the distance the mariners think they can discern rites round a funeral pile, which remind the travelled amongst them of the burnings of widows and the slaying of slaves, as practised by the natives of the Eastern Indies.

At last they approach the sacred city and temple of Pachacamác, more ancient than anything they have seen; and the boldest of the crew, penetrating by night into its filthy courts, happily find reason to doubt whether these

¹ See a speech made by an Indian to a missionary, who told it again to the author quoted below:—"Think not, father, that we embraced the religion of Christ so thoughtlessly as they say, for you must know that we were so weary and discontented with the things that the idols commanded us that we had talked of leaving them and following some other religion."—ACOSTA, *Hist. Nat. y Moral de las Indias*, lib. 5, cap. 22.

106 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

dread precincts have ever been stained by human blood, and whether it is not the great centre of wizardry in the New World, whence oracles proceed, more mysterious than those of ancient Delphi. Here, too, they discover signs of an established priesthood, and of mysterious virgins dedicated to the Sun.

The same thing, which had filled the hearts of many of our devout explorers with mixed feelings of admiration and disgust in Mexico, was visible also in Peru. They found, for instance, in the feast called Râyme, something which forcibly reminded them of the administration of the Holy Communion¹—if, as the pious narrators would afterwards have said, and as the missionaries did say, “it is permitted to use such a word of so diabolic a thing.”²

Again they steer southwards, and again, as in the beginning of their voyage, they coast along a land where there are no temples, and no idols, and no signs of human sacrifice; and, our mariners having discovered by this time, that where the gods are held to be least cruel, men are found to be most kind, land and penetrate into the country of the undaunted Araucans. Here, to their amazement, they discover a people, who are without God and without law, though some wondrous angel or prophet, called Eponamon, is appealed to by incantations, and invoked to aid them in all their difficult affairs. Here, too, is a priesthood such as poets dream of in the golden ages, who, holding to neither God nor law, nor counting any sinfulness in sins, yet keep a life of abstinence and restraint, and exhort the common people, solely from the love of

¹ “The Mamaconas of the Sun, who were a kind of nuns of the Sun, made little loaves of maize flour, mixed and dyed with the blood taken from white sheep, which they had sacrificed that day. Then they immediately commanded that the strangers from all the provinces should enter and range themselves in order, and the priests, who were of a certain lineage, descending from Lluquiyupángui, gave to everyone a morsel of these small loaves.”—ACOSTA, *Hist. Natural y Moral de las Indias*, lib. 5, cap. 23. See also cap. 27, in which occurs the following passage: “An honourable priest showed me an account which I had a long time in my possession, which discussed a certain Guaca, or idol temple, where the Indians worshipped an idol called Tangatángu, which they said was one in three and three in one.”

[For a fuller account of Peruvian rites, see vol. iii.]

² ACOSTA, lib. 5, cap. 23.

wisdom ; reposing not on the services, but on the honours offered to them by those who discern their wisdom, and profit by their counsels.¹

Such was the view which the voyagers of the *Santa Flor*, in common with the early Spanish conquerors (not conquerors, however, in this case) took of the religious opinions of that strange indomitable people, the Araucans.² Future inquirers have learnt more about the Araucans, and have found that they possessed a theology ; but, still, some of the main impressions naturally made upon hasty passers-by, like the voyagers in the *Santa Flor*, are strangely confirmed.

The religion of the Araucans was a kind of Manichæism, with a Good Power and an Evil Power. There were also inferior divinities, amongst whom was this "Eponamon," the god of war. Then, there were genii and nymphs, who presided over human affairs, and who were on the side of the Good Power. No Araucan was so poor in spiritual things, as not to have one of these heavenly nymphs to watch over him ; and when an Araucan came prosperously out of any affair, he was wont to say, "I, too, have my nymph."³

But as the Araucans were an eminently free people and as none of their caciques, whom they call "Ulmenes," were allowed to inflict any kind of injury upon their subjects, so they thought, much less ought the celestial chiefs to injure mortals, or to demand anything for their necessities. On that account, they had no temples, nor idols, nor priests, though, on rare occasions, they sacrificed animals, and burnt tobacco in honour of their deities.⁴

¹ *La Araucana* de ALONSO DE ERCILLA Y ZUÑIGA, canto I.

² [The Spaniards found the Araucanians unconquerable, and the native race has retained practical independence to the present day.]

³ "There was no Araucan who did not flatter himself that he had one at command *Nien cai ñi Amchimalghen*—'I, too, have my nymph,' he said, when he had come successfully out of some transaction."—JUAN IGNACIO MOLINA, *Compendio de la Hist. Civil del Reyno de Chile*, lib. 2, cap. 5.

⁴ "They were governed by the singular principle of not offering any ceremonial form of worship. They had neither temples, idols, nor priests ; nor were they accustomed to offer any sacrifices except in the case of some one very ill, or when they made peace. At those times they sacrificed animals and burnt tobacco, which they believed to be

108 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

Divination, however, took the place of divinity, and such things as dreams and the flight of birds were matters of important observation.

That curious fact, set down by the voyagers of the *Santa Flor*, that the Araucans held that there was no sinfulness in sins, is verified, at least partially, by modern research, which shows that, though some Araucans believe in a Heaven and a Hell, there are others who believe only in a Heaven, and maintain that mundane actions have no influence upon the future state of man.¹

It appears probable that our voyagers and the early Spaniards were right in supposing that there was a certain class of wise or thoughtful men amongst the Araucans; for, in modern times, it is noticed that they have their philosophers, who despise the divinations and superstitions of their countrymen.²

I have thought it worth while to interrupt the voyage of the *Santa Flor*, in order to correct and verify the Spaniards' first impressions of this most interesting people, a study of whose laws and customs may yet throw much light upon American history.

Leaving with regret the hospitable coast of Araucana, our voyagers now coast along a more fearful country than they had yet seen, encountering men of larger stature, clothed in the skins of beasts, and of fiercer nature than the inhabitants of the warm regions they had hitherto traversed. In a land where life is with difficulty maintained, temples rise but slowly. Such buildings, therefore,

the incense most grateful to their Númenes."—MOLINA, *Reyno de Chile*, lib. 2, cap. 5.

The Araucans have shown the utmost tolerance to the missionaries who have sought to introduce Christianity amongst them, but few of them have been converted.

¹ "Others, on the contrary, believe that all the dead enjoy eternal pleasures indiscriminately there, maintaining that actions in this world have no influence on the future state."—MOLINA, *Reyno de Chile*, lib. 2, cap. 5.

² "There are among them some philosophers by nature, who despise such tales, and mock at the folly of their fellow-countrymen."—MOLINA, *Reyno de Chile*, lib. 2, cap. 5.

might not have been visible, and yet some distinct creed be firmly held; but amidst this Patagonian race no rites whatever were to be discerned.¹

The bold Magellan had not yet shown the world the way through the straits which now bear his name, but our religious explorers, anticipating his discovery, have no fear of being detained in these inhospitable regions, or of not finding their way from the mild Pacific to the capricious Atlantic.

Passing through the straits, which connect these two great oceans, by the Cape of *Las Once Mil Virgines*, they coast along a dreary shore resembling that which they had lately traversed, save that the dreariness in this case is of a flat coast instead of a mountainous one. Neither on this flat coast, however, does anything rise up against the horizon which seems like a religious building; nor, on landing, can there be discovered amongst the natives any semblance of religion, except some traces of a belief in evil spirits.² No long delay is made in these inhospitable regions; and soon the *Santa Flor* coasts along a land which has been well described as an irrigated and enclosed garden, the smiling La Plata.³ Here they find cultivated fields and a country rich in all things, but inhabited by a fierce people, with no more knowledge of religion⁴ than their neighbours, the Patagonians; and

¹ "This people is exceedingly barbarous, for besides eating raw flesh, even that of man, they have not a spark of religion or social polity among them."—DE LAET, *Novus Orbis*, lib. 13, cap. 14.

² "Their theology only knows the Devil. They say that when one of them dies ten or twelve devils appear and dance all round the dead man, one of whom is taller than the others, and makes a greater noise and more mirth than the rest."—ANTONIO FIGAFETTA, *Primo Viaggio intorno al Globo terraqueo*, lib. 1, p. 32.

FIGAFETTA accompanied the celebrated Magellan.

³ "No one but would feel delight in seeing this most delicious country which (like a beautiful garden irrigated by many fountains and surrounded by walls) is enclosed by high mountains and watered by innumerable rivers."—WYTFLIET, *Descript. Ptolem. Augmentum*, "Plata," p. 118.

⁴ In the *Comentarios* of CABEZA DE VACA, the first Governor of La Plata, there is hardly any mention of the religion of the Indians. Once, the idolatry and belief in a demon of the Indians at the Puerto de los Reyes is spoken of in the following manner:—"From this place commenced among these Indians the spread of idolatry and the worship

110 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

these fierce men would have laughed with wild scorn, if they had been told that, in a few generations, their descendants were to be under the mild sway of unarmed monks, and that the missions of Paraguay¹ were to be celebrated all over the world.

Our mariners moving northwards, approach the vast and

of idols made of wood, and, according to the information of the governor, farther off, inland, the Indians had idols of gold and silver. By kind words they were induced to leave their idolatry, telling them that they should discard and burn their idols and believe in the True God—He who had created Heaven and earth, man and sea, fishes and all other things; and that he whom they had worshipped was the devil, who would bring them mockery and delusion. So they burnt many of their idols, although the chiefs of the Indians went about very terrified, saying that by so doing they would kill the devil, who would show himself very angry. And as soon as the church was built and mass said, the devil fled from there, and the Indians went re-assured and without fear.”—Cap. 54.—BARCIA, *Historiadores*, tom. 1.

¹ Of the state of religion amongst the Guaranis of Paraguay, we have an account from very good authority, being that of one of the Jesuit fathers, a man apparently of much intelligence and great benevolence, who was engaged in what he justly denominates the “spiritual conquest of Paraguay.”

He states that these Guaranis believed in one God, and had no idols; although they venerated the bones of some men who had been great magicians amongst them.

The word for God in their language was compounded of two words: the first signifying wonder; the second interrogation. “Wonderful! who shall declare it?” appears to be the translation of the word Túpa.

“To the true God,” FATHER RUIZ says, “they never made any sacrifice, nor more than a simple recognition,” which he believes to be a relic of what religion the Apostle of St. Thomas (who, according to his fancy, had been in the Indies) had left among them:—“They know that there is a God, and, to a certain extent, his unity, as may be gathered from the name given to him—Túpâ. The first word, Tú, is admiration; the second, Pâ, is an interrogation, and so correspond with the Hebrew vocable Manhú, ‘Quid est hoc.’ At no time had they any idols, although the devil fallaciously imposed upon them the veneration of the bones of some Indians, who when living, were famous magicians (as farther on will be seen). To the true God they never made any sacrifice, nor had more than a simple knowledge of Him, and I hold, for my part, that this alone remains to them of the preaching of the Apostle St. Thomas, who, as we see, first announced the divine mysteries to them.”—*Conquista Espiritual hecha por los Religiosos de la Compañía de Jesus, en las Provincias del Paraguay, Parana, Uruguay, y Tape. Escrita por el PADRE ANTONIO RUIZ de la misma Compañía.* Madrid, 1639. Ritos de los Indios Guaranis, sec. 10, p. 13.

rich country of Brazil. Being now in happier climes, they can give more time and thought to their own religion, and of an evening, especially in threatening weather, they perceived a sacred light aloft, a sign to their pious minds of divine favour and of safety.¹

But nothing can they discern on the beautiful shores they wind along, that would show that the barbarians there would have any sympathy with them, should they speak to them about the comforts of religion and the existence of a Deity.²

The more curious and enterprizing amongst the voyagers, who land sometimes on these shores, may have discerned something like a trace of religion in what appears to have been a morning exhortation, made by some venerable old man to those who lived with him in the large hut, or barn, in which many families were wont to live together on that part of this coast.³ But by the general body of the explorers the Brazilians are pronounced to have little more religion than the trees from which that country takes its name.

These conclusions, however, of our religious mariners must not be taken for more than first impressions. Could

¹ "During these storms the *Corpo Santo*, or body of St. Anselm, appeared to us several times. Amongst others, one night that it was very dark on account of the bad weather, the said Saint appeared in the form of a fire in the main-top, in great brilliancy, and remained there near two and a-half hours, which comforted us greatly, for we were in tears, only expecting the hour of perishing. And when that holy light was going away from us, it gave out so great a brilliancy in the eyes of each that we were near a quarter of an hour like people blinded and calling out for mercy."—PIGAFETTA, *Primo Viaggio*, l. 1, p. 13.

² "They worshipped nothing, nor did they believe in a future life, with happiness for the good and punishment for the bad, but thought that all finished with this life—the souls with the bodies—and so lived like beasts, without reason, consolation, responsibility or prudence."—HERRERA, *Hist. de las Indias*, dec. 4, lib. 8, cap. 13.

³ "They are not led to any knowledge of gods, but only worship the rising sun, and believe in the immortality of the soul. In the morning, when they rise from their hanging beds, before they eat, one of the oldest of the family, walking near the hut with a grave and solemn step, exhorts them to love their wives and cultivate the desire for vengeance on their enemies."—WYTFLIET, *Descript. Ptol. Augmentum*, p. 124.

112 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

they have lingered on the coast, and learnt the language, they might have found rites and ceremonies and superstitions, which would at least have led them to conclude that these so-called savages were not altogether devoid of religious feelings. But the Spaniard, himself a man whose religion was manifested in some way or other many times in the course of a day, too readily concluded that other people had no religion at all, if he perceived no signs of it during the short time which the vessel lingered at any particular part of the coast. Perhaps he did not think he was witnessing a religious ceremony, when, in some clear spot in the forest, made bright by the reflection of the light from flowers¹ (what a picture of tropical vegetation!), he beheld the dusky figures of men advance and recede in measured movements.

Had our mariners gone up the Amazon, for instance, which, from its first discoverer, ought rather to have had the melodious name of Orellana, they would have found the powers of nature deified, and, as might be expected in that river-abounding country, a river-god, with a symbol of a fish in his hand.²

¹ "Sometimes you traverse open spots where a stronger light is reflected from the flowery ground or from the shining leaves of the neighbouring high trees; sometimes you enter a cool shady bower. Here a thick wreath of paullinæ, securidacæ, mikánias, passion-flowers, adorned with an incredible number of flowers, climb through the crowns of the celtis."—SPIX and MARTIUS, *Travels in Brazil*, i, l. 2, c. 2.

² "They had idols of their own making, each distinguished by some fit symbol, as the God of the River, by a fish in his hand: another was supposed to preside over their seeds and harvests: a third to be the giver of victory. No ceremonies of adoration were in use: the idols lay neglected in a corner, till they were wanted for seed time, or fishing, or war. Idolaters are always disposed to add to the number of their divinities. A chief who entertained Teixeira on his way was greatly impressed with the power of the Portuguese gods, because they had preserved the flotilla during so long a voyage, and he besought the Commander to leave him one, who might protect him and his people, and succour them in their need. Another Indian, who avowing his contempt for idols, had set himself up as an object of worship, was invited by the Portuguese to the knowledge of the true God. He came at their request, to be instructed, but when he found that their god was not visible, returned unpersuaded, and continued his claims to adoration, either in insanity or fraud."—SOUTHEY'S *History of Brazil*, i, ch. 18.

But for such enterprizes time would not have been spared, and the expedition must pass on to the unhealthy coast of Essequibo, where they would find nothing but a religion of fear, and a demon worshipped in order to appease him.¹

They are now approaching the term of their voyage, but before they reach the island of Trinidad and the coast of Paria, they notice that strange but brave race of Caribs who build their habitation in trees, and amidst their marshes are indomitable. But no sign of a temple, or of religious rites, is here; and it is with a melancholy satisfaction that the explorers see the three conical hills in Trinidad, which rejoiced the weary eyes of the great Admiral, when he first beheld land in his third voyage, and thus found a mysterious sanction for the resolve which he had entertained throughout the voyage, of naming after the Trinity the first land he should behold.

The voyage is now, practically speaking, ended,² as there remains only the accustomed route from Trinidad to Cadiz to be traversed, and no religion to be contemplated by the explorers but their own,—in which, however, the recent “heresies” of Martin Luther might give some little scope for contemplation. But men are not fond of considering what is very familiar to them, and we may venture to assume that, in such an expedition, the creed of the explorers would have been the last thing regarded

¹ “They worship only a Devil, not that they are ignorant that he is evil, but that he may do them no harm.”—DE LAET, *Novus Orbis*, lib. 17, cap. 17.

² The *Santa Flor* would certainly have needed refitting, and the mariners rest; else, had they continued their voyage across the Gulf of Mexico, and then round the coast of Florida, they would have made their survey more perfect, though they would only have discovered a state of things, in respect to religion, exactly parallel to that which they had already seen in so many latitudes. Cabeça de Vaca, who lived for years amongst the natives in Florida, and traversed the country from Apalache to California, found no sacrifices and no idols, and a people ready for a rapid conversion to Christianity: “For two thousand leagues that we went by land, or sea in ships, and for another ten months that after leaving captivity we travelled without stopping by land, we found neither sacrifices nor idolatry.”—*Naufragios de ALVAR NUÑEZ DE VACA en la Florida*, cap. 36.—BARCIA, *Historiadores*, v. I.

critically by them, unless, as a just cause for rejoicing at the contrast between their own Faith and the barbarous creeds which they had for so long a time been observing.

Once more at home, and pondering what they had seen, they are at a loss to decide whether these religions of the New World proceed from the corruption and decadence of one religion that grew up in that country ages ago, and once was great in it,—or whether they are the gradual growth of a new religion, seen in different stages of advancement, — or whether they proceed from the partial oblivion of an old religion brought from an old country, what little was remembered being mingled with the growth of a new natural religion, varying in each sweep of the coast according to the peculiar circumstances of the tribe amongst which it was growing to maturity.

The whole subject well merits the largest and profoundest inquiry; and the laws of thought, which create and modify natural religion, might perhaps be more easily discovered from a consideration of all that was noticed in the discovery of the New World, than from any other body of evidence which exists on that subject, gathered from the religions of the rest of the world.

The curious observer of human nature might here see how the shrewd and strong man imposes upon the credulity of the simple beings around him, till he becomes the wizard of his tribe,—and a kind of witchcraft, their religion: how the hero is honoured by those he has served and succoured, until they worship him almost as a god, and when he dies, give up to him the life-blood of those who were dearest to him, and whom he would have died to serve: how the king, a descendant probably of this hero, though perhaps a very unworthy one, is honoured in the same way as his great ancestor, until royal obsequies drink up rivers of human blood.

The same observer will notice, not without a sad smile on his countenance, how that which was fluent and occasional becomes fixed, formal, and established; for the savage and the semi-civilized man are essentially conservative; and the cruelty which has once, on some great occasion, been committed in honour of the gods,

or the heroes, or the wise men, must never more be pretermitted for fear of their avenging wrath.

And this avenging wrath, how natural, from all they saw around them, to imagine its existence! Looking at this world, at the terrors and difficulties within a man and without him, beholding the fierceness of Nature, for she has a fierce aspect, and not fiercer anywhere than in the New World, what more natural to suppose, than that there were cruel beings to appease, and then what more inevitable than that men should offer up to these beings the most beautiful and noblest creature in creation, their fellow-man.¹

The gloomy cleft of superstition once entered, how hard to retrace the steps! One wise man, or one hero (alas, how little understood!) is the cause of introducing a cruel, a barbarous, or a silly rite. How many heroes and how many wise men must battle for ages to subdue that one small item of superstition! For all the dread past is summoned up against them; and whatever is dark, fierce, stupid, or intolerant, in the minds of their fellow-men of the present generation, comes forth to fight against the few wise and heroic men, if any such there be, who discern the magnitude of the superstition.

In considering the Conquest of the Indies, we see that there was urgent need of the presence of some greater beings than the natives, who should cancel the past for them, and lift these savages out of their homicidal ways. Accordingly, the Spaniards — themselves not the least stern and fanatical of men — appeared upon the scene.

¹ Human sacrifices, though very horrible, are not by any means the most cruel things that are done under the sun, being full of motive. Considering what we know of each other's sufferings, how the most prosperous life is thick with concealed disaster and disappointment, no more to be relied upon than the smooth surface of the sea near a rocky coast, how any man can needlessly molest another is astonishing; but nothing is to be wondered at when the logical faculty is once fairly applied to the service of superstition, or of resentment.

CHAPTER VI

LAS CASAS AS A COLONIST—OCAMPO'S EXPEDITION

RETURNING to the religion of the inhabitants of the coast of Cumaná, with whom this history has at present most concern, it was no other than it appeared to the voyagers in the *Santa Flor*—namely, a religion of the simplest kind, where the priesthood is not established, where the civil government does not claim in any way the power of a priesthood, and where the religion is little better than a course of small superstitious observances, conjoined with a belief in witchcraft.

For a characteristic manifestation of the religious feeling of these tribes, the way in which they received the coming of an eclipse may be taken. They supposed it to be a sign of the anger of the sun and moon at their idleness, or ingratitude. On the appearance, therefore, of the eclipse, a sudden and wondrous activity pervaded the Indian villages of that coast. The warriors sounded their musical instruments of war, and couched their lances to demonstrate their valour and their resolution to defend the gods in the field of battle. The husbandmen began to busy themselves in digging and cutting wood. The women cast maize and reeds into the air, uttering lamentations and confessing aloud their indolence and their objection to labour. This sudden demonstration of activity was undertaken, distinctly in the hope of appeasing the anger which, they said, the moon on these occasions meant to show, on account of their feeble ways of proceeding, and of their inveterate idleness.¹ When

¹ "Some played warlike instruments, and prepared their arms in demonstration of their valour and readiness to defend them on the field of battle. Others gave assistance in working, cutting wood, and busying themselves in other laborious employments to appease the anger they said the moon felt for their weakness and idleness."—ANTONIO CAULIN, *Historia Corográfica Natural y Evangelica de la Nuevo Andalucía*, lib. 1, cap. 13.

the eclipse was over, they were "very contented in having appeased their god with these feigned promises and vain offerings; and they concluded the unwelcome labour of the day by a dance, which ended in a bout of drunkenness, being their ordinary way of winding up their festivals."¹

That practice which seems so unaccountable, if it be once seriously thought upon, of worshipping some of the lower animals, was not unknown on the coast of Cumaná; and their treatment of toads may be mentioned as a curious and ludicrous instance of that kind of superstition. They held the toad to be, as they said, "the lord of the waters," and therefore they were very compassionate with it, and dreaded by any accident to kill a toad, though, as has been found the case with other idolaters, they were ready, in times of difficulty, to compel a favourable hearing from their pretended deities; for they were known to keep these toads with care under an earthen vessel, and to whip them with little switches, when there was a scarcity of provisions and a want of rain.² Another superstition worthy of note was, that when they hunted down any game, before killing it, they were wont to open its mouth and introduce some drops of maize wine, in order that its soul, which they judged to be the same as that of men, might give notice to the rest of its species of the good entertainment which it had met with, and thus lead to them to think that, if they came too, they would participate in this kindly treatment.³

I mention these vain and trifling superstitions with a view of showing the low state of religious intelligence amongst the inhabitants of that coast, which corresponds with their general simplicity in other matters.

Having prepared the way for introducing the departure of Las Casas from Spain to his territory on the Pearl Coast, by narrating the discovery of that coast, and its occupation by the Spaniards, together with some account of its primitive inhabitants, their customs and religion, the Clerigo himself may re-appear upon the scene with

¹ CAULIN, lib. 1, cap. 13.

² CAULIN, *Hist. de la Nuevo Andalucía*, lib. 1, cap. 13.

³ *Ibid.* lib. 1, c. 13.

118 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

more hope of his mission being understood, and of his project of colonization meeting with that sympathy from the reader which it so much needed from his contemporaries and fellow-countrymen. Unfortunately, some of the most interesting events to read about are those which were thought very tiresome and very small affairs at the time when they were being transacted.

Las Casas, having completed his preparations, embarked at San Lucar on the 11th of November 1520. He took with him some labourers, "humble and simple people, in order that they might respond to the simplicity and gentleness of the Indians"; and his friends furnished him with many little things as presents for the natives. He had a good voyage, and, shaping his course for the West India islands in the first instance, he landed at Porto Rico; where, however, he met with news that must have been as a whirlwind of destruction to his hopes.

To understand thoroughly the transaction with which Las Casas was made acquainted on his arrival at Porto Rico, it is necessary to refer back to the proceedings of Pedro de Córdova and the Dominican monks under his charge in Hispaniola. It may be remembered that Pedro de Córdova, on his visit to Spain in 1512, was very kindly received by King Ferdinand, who favoured the good Father's anxiety to spread the Catholic Faith in the Tierra-firme, and with that view gave orders that the requisite assistance in the way of outfit should be rendered to Pedro de Córdova by the authorities at St. Domingo. The reader may recollect that he lost no time in despatching three of his brethren to Cumaná; that two of them, Francisco de Córdova and Juan Garces, had established themselves peaceably on that coast, at Piritú in Maracapána, when some marauding Spaniards landed there, and kidnapped a Cacique with seventeen of his men; that the neighbouring Indians in retaliation seized upon the Dominican monks, threatening to put them to death if the kidnapped Indians were not brought back within a certain time; that the Judges at St. Domingo condemned the kidnapping as illegal, but appropriated the Indians as slaves for themselves; that when the appointed time

had expired, the poor monks were put to death by their captors; and that Las Casas had always made this transaction a subject of the loudest complaint. Orders were in consequence given by the authorities that these kidnapped Indians should be returned; but I do not find that they ever were returned, and probably there was little or no trace to be found of them by the time such orders came from Spain.

The Dominicans were not at all daunted by this martyrdom of their brethren: we are told that they spoke of them as "fortunate"; and Pedro de Córdoba found others of his monks ready and rejoiced to undertake the same mission on the Tierra-firme as that in which his own relative Francisco de Córdoba and Juan Garces had miserably perished. There was something of adventure and of novelty connected with this form of martyrdom, which must have served to make it attractive. Accordingly, in the year 1518,¹ several monks, Franciscans as well as Dominicans, went to what they called "the Tierra-firme," but which may be more precisely described as the Pearl Coast, and founded there two monasteries.² They were joined by the monks from Picardy, who are spoken of in other parts of this narrative. Certainly, these monastic Orders were wonderfully adapted for some kinds of spiritual labour, as by their means religious men found themselves at once in intimate communication with other religious men all over the globe. That the New World might have its due share of monks as colonists, orders were given either by Cardinal Ximenes, or by the Flemish ministers, early in Charles the Fifth's reign, that each year

¹ [The *Audiencia* of Española, writing to Charles V., say the Franciscans had been there since 1514 (*Col. de Doc. Intéd . . . del Arch. de Indias*, i, p. 422); they are said to have first come to the Indies in 1502, eight years before the Dominicans (*Decadas de las Indias*).]

² "Afterwards there went from Española some Dominican fathers, and with them some Franciscans with some monks of those who had come from Picardy, all of whom were carried over to the continent where each Order chose its district and built its monastery, and leading a pure and exemplary life was careful to preach to, and teach, the Indians. In the meantime the Jeronimite Fathers in Española were careful to provide them with whatever was necessary."—HERRERA, dec. 2, lib. 3, cap. 7.

six Dominicans should be provided with the necessary outfit, and have a free passage from Seville to the Indies. The Jeronimite Fathers also, while they governed, had been industrious in furthering these missions to the mainland; and there was some prospect of one part at least of the Indies, the Pearl Coast, the earthly Paradise of Columbus, being first colonized by *religiosos*, instead of by fierce soldiers, or gainful merchants of men.

The two Orders founded their monasteries at some distance from each other. The name of the Dominican monastery was Santa Fé de Chiribichi. It was built without any harassment of the neighbouring Indians, but by the labour of the monks and of their lay brothers. The Indians received the Fathers kindly; and these, when they had sent away the sailors, remained alone among the natives. The good Fathers seem to have been quite successful in attracting to themselves the kind regards of the Indians; and there they lived fearlessly enough among these so-called savages, affording by their innocent lives some insight to the Indians of what the Christian religion might be. The general state of the country was so peaceable, that a single Spaniard might safely go into the interior of the country for three or four leagues with merchandize.¹

The chief enemies of the monks seem to have been certain venomous insects, which molested them unceasingly; for in those parts they had no less than three or four kinds of mosquitoes to encounter, "very importunate," which teased them by day, and others in greater numbers which tormented them by night. Las Casas had been mindful, it is said, of this convent, and had brought with him an order for its increase. Any such establishment would naturally be of the highest importance in promoting his

¹ "A single Spaniard could go with his merchandize three or four leagues inland and could return alone with the produce of his barter; those who have done it told me this."—LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxvi, p. 167.

This is confirmed by OVIEDO, the opponent of LAS CASAS:—"This province, from Paria to Unari (which was a hundred leagues of the coast of the continent) was so peaceful that one or two Christians could go everywhere, and trade with the Indians quite safely."—*Hist. Gen. y Nat.*, lib. 19, cap. 3.

plans; and he had always been on the most friendly terms with the Dominicans, being of the same opinion with them about the freedom of the Indians (*eadem sentiens de republicâ*); which community of opinion, especially in matters of much controversy, is a surer bond even than community of interest. No one, therefore, would have been more delighted than Las Casas to hear that the monastery of Santa Fé had only to contend with venomous insects, the natural product of that soil and that sun.

Unfortunately, however, in the neighbouring island of Cubagua, there dwelt "a sinner" (*un pecador de hombre*) of the name of Alonso de Ojeda,—not the companion of Columbus who so boldly and craftily seized on Caonabo, but another of like nature to him—who employed himself in the occupation of pearl-fishing. This young man, of whom Las Casas justly says, that if he had not been born, the world would have lost nothing,¹ found that he wanted more slaves for his fishery than he possessed. What means so easy as going to the neighbouring coast; ascertaining, or rather declaring, that the inhabitants were cannibals; and then seizing them for slaves! Accordingly, he leagued himself with others like him; and they came over in a caravel to the coast of Chiribichi. The first thing they did was to pay a visit to the Dominican monastery. There happened at the time to be only two of the brethren at the convent, the others having gone to Cubagua to preach and to receive confessions. The Dominicans were delighted to see any of their fellow-countrymen, and welcomed Ojeda most cordially. After dinner he expressed a wish to see the neighbouring Chief, who was accordingly sent for. His name was Maraguay (*la penúltima sílaba lengua*), a man of much ability and some haughtiness, who already was not altogether satisfied with the ways of the Spaniards, but dissembled what he felt, in order that he might retain the monks as sureties for their countrymen.² After the usual greetings, Ojeda

¹ LAS CASAS, *Hist. Apologética*, MS., cap. 246.

² "Who was not altogether satisfied with the ways of the Spaniards, but who silently dissembled about these things to retain the monks in the country as pledges for the Christians."—LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxvi, p. 168.

asked one of the Dominicans for a sheet of paper and some writing materials, which the Dominican gave him. Ojeda then began to question Maraguay as to whether there were any cannibals in those parts. The Indian Chief answered angrily, "No, no"; and in disgust shortly afterwards took his leave.

Ojeda and his men then quitted the monastery and went four leagues lower down, to Maracapána, a *pueblo* belonging to a Chief called Gil González, who received them with the utmost kindness. This Cacique had been in Hispaniola where he had been well treated by Gil González, an official person there, whose name he had taken, probably from the custom, known amongst the Indians, of friends interchanging names as a sign of special amity. Ojeda, having found the question about cannibals not answered to his liking, by Maraguay, did not ask it of González, but accounted for his presence there by another pretext. He wanted, he said, to buy maize of a tribe a little farther onwards in the hilly country. The next morning he went to this tribe and bought maize; but found, as he said, that he required fifty men to help him in carrying it to his vessels. These were readily granted to him, and, their hire being agreed upon, they loaded themselves with the maize, and after bringing it to the shore, being fatigued with the journey, they laid down to take a *siesta*—and awoke to find themselves attacked by the Spaniards, who succeeded after much slaughter in capturing a good many of the Indians, and carrying them off to the vessels. Whether any of the men captured, or slaughtered, were vassals of Gil González, does not appear; but at any rate this Chief resolved to avenge them, and, watching for a disembarkation of Ojeda at another place, the Cacique attacked him, slew him and those that were with him, and, pursuing the caravel in boats, made an effort to capture that too, but failed in his attempt.

As might be expected, the Indians in Maraguay's country had great suspicions now of the two inmates of the Dominican monastery: especially after having seen that piece of paper, given by one of the brethren to Ojeda. Ojeda's intention in asking for it had been

to have the answers of the Chief taken down by a notary who was present, which answers were of course to convict the Indians of cannibalism. The monks were entirely innocent of any knowledge of Ojeda's scheme, but now came in for all the odium attached to it.

A Sunday or two after these transactions had occurred, as the brethren were celebrating mass, a ring at the monastery bell was heard.¹ One of the brethren went to open the door, and was immediately struck down by a fatal blow: and then the Indians entering and going behind the other monk, who was unconscious of the death of his companion, cleaved him down too. Justly, as Las Casas claims for them, may these men be put in the list of martyrs.

The rising of the Indians was not confined to the spot where the injury had been perpetrated, but the revolt fled like a flame along the whole of the Pearl Coast, from Maracapána to Cariaco. The Franciscan monks at Cumaná fell into the same odium which had come upon the Dominican community at Chiribichi. The Indians hastened to attack the monastery. Two of the brethren were fortunate enough to escape in a boat to Araya, and from thence to Cubagua; but one unfortunate Franciscan, Father Dionysius, fell into the hands of the insurgents. The Indians debated much as to what they should do with their prisoner, but at last resolved to put him to death, which they did, the poor monk imploring the forgiveness of Heaven for his persecutors, and saying, with truth, "that they knew not what they were doing." The fury of the Indians, once excited, was such, that they did not spare even the live creatures that were found in the monastery down to the cats. Then they pulled down the building, trampled upon the garden, broke the bell, tore the crucifix into bits and threw them out upon the highways, an unconscious act of sacrilege which made the pious Spaniards of Cubagua tremble.² These Cubaguans had other causes for

¹ [On Sunday 3rd September 1520. *Audiencia* to Charles V.—*Col. de Doc. . . . del Arch. de Indias*, i, p. 423.]

² GOMARA, *Hist. de las Indias*, cap. 76.—BARCIA, *Historiadores*, tom. 2.

124 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

trembling. Their pearl-fishing had brought great gain; they were prosperous; they were rich; many of them were merchants.¹ They heard that the infuriated Indians who had already killed eighty Spaniards, were taking to their boats, and intending to attack Cubagua. The Alcalde, Antonio Flores, is accused of being a man of no courage. There were three hundred Spaniards on the island, and such a number might have defied thousands of Indians. There is one fact, however, which the various writers who have commented upon the Alcalde's conduct, seem to have forgotten; and that is, that there was not a drop of water to be had in any part of that island.² Whether moved by a knowledge of this fact, or by a conviction that his Spaniards were not in sufficient force to resist the numbers that would be brought against them,³ Antonio Flores put his little colony on board some vessels which were fortunately at Cubagua, and steered straight for St. Domingo, where he arrived to be subjected to much obloquy and blame. These deplorable events took place at the end of the year 1519.⁴

The Spaniards, in deserting Cubagua, could take but little of their riches with them; and when the Indians poured like a furious wave over the island, they found a great spoil of wine, silks, cloths, and all the goods and merchandize which these wealthy pearl-fishers had gathered round them.

¹ JUAN DE CASTELLANOS, *Varones Ilustres de Indias*, elegía 13, canto 1.

² "But which is sterile and small,
Without a single river or spring,
Without a tree or shoot of timber,
But thistles and brambles only."

—CASTELLANOS, *Varones Ilustres de Indias*, eleg. 13, canto 1.

³ [Want of water and inability to obtain it from the mainland was the reason.]

⁴ [There seems to be a mistake of a year in this date. The official report of these events to the Emperor, from the responsible officers at San Domingo, is dated 14th November 1520, in which they are related as having happened in September, and Ocampo's punitive force is spoken of as preparing. Moreover, Las Casas sailed in November 1520, and he meets Ocampo at Puerto Rico; obviously the local government did not take fifteen months to restore order on the Pearl Coast, nor could Ocampo have required a year to get ready.]

Not a Spaniard was left upon Cubagua, or within the wide extent of the Pearl Coast. It was as free from the men of the Old World as when Columbus first caught sight of it twenty-one years before. But how different must be the feelings with which the Spaniards and the Indians would meet again, after all that had occurred within these eventful twenty-one years, from the mild complacency and innocent satisfaction which on both sides had characterized their first meeting. If it be of any use to repeat the remark, it may certainly here be noticed, what great mischief, in critical circumstances, any one bad man can do.¹

The above story, as told by the earliest Spanish historians, is a model of what may be done in the way of prejudice and injustice by judicious, or careless omission. The rising of the Indians is attributed to "their own malice,"² or at most to their objection to being made to work at the pearl-fisheries; whereas, it was the immediate and natural result of the outrage committed upon them by Ojeda.

When these events at Cubagua and on the Pearl Coast came to the knowledge of the *audiencia* at St. Domingo, they resolved to send an expedition to Chiribichi and its vicinity, to avenge the murder of the monks and the devastation of Cubagua,—and, as a matter of course, to enslave Indians.³ This expedition was now on its

¹ [Ojeda and most of his men were killed by the Indians of Maracapána (see *ante*, p. 122). There must have been some previous indications of unrest among the natives, because about January 1520 some Spanish traders had been killed by them. See the instructions to Ocampo.—*Col. de Doc. . . . del Arch. de Indias*, i, p. 438.]

² OVIEDO, *Hist. Gen. y Nat.*, lib. 19, cap. 3. See also GOMARA, *Hist. de las Indias*, cap. 76; BARCIA, *Historiadores*, tom. 2.

³ [A very important proclamation was issued in Española in 1520. It declared all the islands not settled by Christians, except Trinidad, the Lucayan, Barbadoes, Curaçoa, and Margarita, to be inhabited by barbarian races and caribs, "enemies of Christians, refusing communication with them, and eaters of human flesh." On all such the Spaniards might have licence to make war and take them for slaves. On the main land the whole of the north-east coast, from the Isthmus to the Orinoco was divided into zones, where the Spaniards might or might not take slaves, or which were considered doubtful, and judgment temporarily reserved.]

126 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

way, and was expected at Porto Rico, when Las Casas arrived there; and this is the news with which he was greeted. We may imagine the dismay that such tidings, appreciated by him in all their consequences, would cause in his mind. Fortunately for himself, he was one of those men who find some relief for their misfortunes in their indignation. Moreover, he probably entertained a hope that he would yet be able to prevent the mischief which he foresaw; and, accordingly, when the vessels arrived at Porto Rico, he showed his powers to Ocampo, whom the *audiencia* had entrusted with the command, and endeavoured to detain the expedition. But Ocampo, with all due expressions of civility to Las Casas, said, that he must execute his orders, and that the *audiencia* would bear him harmless.¹ The expedition accordingly sailed on: and Las Casas, after distributing his labourers by threes and fours amongst the inhabitants of Porto Rico, hastened to St. Domingo.

His appearance there was very unwelcome. Indeed, from the exertions he had already made at the court of Spain and elsewhere in favour of the Indians, he was odious to all the Spanish colonists.² He endeavoured to carry things with a high hand, but met with the usual hindrances and vexations that he had endured both at home and abroad from his countrymen in office. They did not dare, however, to oppose him openly, clothed as he was with the king's authority, and having the reputation of being in favour with the all-powerful Flemish ministers. He demanded that a proclamation should be made of the Royal Order which he was the bearer of: namely—that no one should dare to injure or affront any of the natives of those provinces which were within

¹ [That is the account written by Las Casas many years afterwards, but according to Benzoni (*Hist. Novi Orbis*) the interviews did not proceed so smoothly: "with biting words and mocking each other some days elapsed till the doctor, seeing that Ocampo would not obey the orders and laughed at him, determined to go to San Domingo."]

² "Many did not desire to see him, because he was hated in all these countries, it being known that he tried to liberate the Indians and free them from the power of their murderers."—LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxvi, p. 173.

the limits granted to the Clerigo Las Casas. If they did do so, it would be at the peril of the confiscation of all their goods, and even of their lives. This was proclaimed in the usual manner, with sound of trumpet, in the principal streets, the Admiral and all the chief authorities being present.

He then demanded that, with the least possible delay, they should recall their fleet, discontinue the war, and cause their troops to quit the territory which had been given in charge to him. Again, they did not dare to refuse openly, but made answer that they were about to take the matter into consideration: and many days they spent in discourse about it without their coming to any conclusion.

Meanwhile, a counter-attack was very skilfully made by the Clerigo's enemies, which term probably included the whole population of the colony, with the exception of a few private friends, and of the Dominican monks or any other persons in religious orders. There was a certain Biscayan shipwright who had two vessels of his own that were constantly engaged in the Cubaguan slave-trade, for so it may be called. This man no sooner saw Las Casas and knew the business upon which he had come, than, as the Clerigo expresses it, he would sooner have seen the Evil One. Scanning the ship of Las Casas with all the critical dislike of an enemy, the Biscayan pronounced that it was not sea-worthy, and that it could not be made sea-worthy. Here was a subject for inquiry which the authorities were willing should be investigated without delay. The king's subjects must not be permitted to go in vessels that were not sea-worthy. An examination was made, the hostile shipwright being, according to the Clerigo's recollection, one of the persons appointed to examine. The body thus constituted condemned the vessel, pronouncing it neither fit for navigation, nor capable of being made fit. "All this," as Las Casas declares, "was done to hinder the business of the Clerigo, as being odious to all; for all, both judges and official men, had a share in the business of man-stealing." By the condemnation of his vessel, Las Casas lost what was worth to him 500 pesos of

128 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

gold, and, what were far more valuable at the present juncture,—time, reputation, and the means of transit.

Meanwhile, Ocampo had reached the port of Maracapána, in the territory of Gil González, where the Spaniard took a very crafty method¹ of securing the chief men of that district. On approaching the coast, Ocampo kept all his men but a few sailors, under hatches. The Indians, on hailing the vessels, inquired whence they came, to which the Spaniards answered "Castilla." The Indians shouted out "Hayti, Hayti?" The Spaniards again replied "Castilla, Castilla," and made signs that they had wine and other things from Spain to barter. The Indians, thinking that they had to deal with Spaniards who did not know of what had happened on that coast, no longer hesitated to enter the vessels and exchange goods. The Cacique himself, more wary than his followers, remained in a boat near to the vessel. But one of the sailors, who was an excellent swimmer, let himself down by a rope, sprung into the Cacique's canoe, plunged with him into the water, and, stabbing him in several places with a dagger, succeeded, with the help of some other sailors, in carrying him to the vessel. At the same time, a signal having been given on board, the concealed Spaniards rushed on deck, and the Indians in the vessel were captured. Gil González and the principal chiefs were hung from the yard-arm as an example of terror to the Indians standing on the shore. Amongst these, it is said, was the Cacique of Cumaná. Now Ocampo had on board the wife, or one of the wives, of this Cacique, named Donna Maria, who had been carried by Flores from Cubagua to Hispaniola. The Spanish Commander gave her liberty and set her on shore, and through her means peace was ultimately restored between the Spaniards and the Indians of that coast, but not until Ocampo had thoroughly chastized the latter, and captured many slaves; carrying his incursions, I observe, into that mountainous country, the abode of the Tagares,² where Ojeda had bought his maize and

¹ "A very pretty way," OVIEDO calls it.

² "He proceeded to the province of Cumaná and to the *Tagares*, making incursions into the land and taking many Indians in diverse

had committed the crime which caused the general rising of the inhabitants of the Pearl Coast.

Las Casas soon learnt by the surest means what was going on in his province of Cumaná, for, while he was endeavouring to adjust matters with the authorities of Hispaniola, Indian slaves were brought to St. Domingo, the first-fruits of Ocampo's campaigning. At this the Clerigo was excessively indignant:—to use his own expressive words — “he went raging, and with terrible sternness bore witness against this thing before the *audiencia*,”¹ pouring out all manner of threats against them. They thought it better to come to terms with him, and for this purpose they devised a plan which would not only remedy the past, but from which they might hope for some profit in the future. This was to offer to become partners with Las Casas in working out his grant from the King. They sent for him and made their proposition. He listened favourably to their terms; and it was finally agreed that Las Casas should go to the territories assigned to him; and that the expedition which had been sent out under Ocampo should now be placed under the Clerigo's command. Accordingly, two vessels were fitted out for him, and well provisioned. Ocampo's expedition consisted of three hundred men: out of them Las Casas was to choose a hundred and twenty, who were to be paid wages: the rest were to be sent back.

This agreement between the authorities of St. Domingo and Las Casas took the form of a commercial speculation. There was to be a company, and the venture was to be divided into twenty-four shares. The King was to have six shares in the concern, the Clerigo and his Knights six shares, the Admiral three shares, the Auditors, the Treasurer, the Contador and other official people, each a share. The means of profit were to be found in pearl-fishing, exchanging trifling commodities for gold, and making slaves, which last was a great object, for the

ways, executing some according to justice as it appeared to him, and killing others who defended their liberty.”—OVIEDO, *Hist. Gen. y Nat.*, lib. 19, cap. 4.

¹ LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxvi, p. 175.

130 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

following reason. Many of the principal persons in St. Domingo had bands of slaves employed under mayor-domos in the pearl fishery at Cubagua; and human life was swiftly exhausted in procuring these diseased productions then so highly valued—the water mines, if we may call them so, being quite as injurious to the delicate Indian as the land ones. A constant supply of slaves on the spot where their services were most valuable, was much to be desired.

This last mentioned means of profit was to be provided for in the following manner. Las Casas was to ascertain what Indians in those parts were cannibals, or would not be in amity and converse with the Spaniards, or would not receive the Faith and the preachers of it. Upon his pronouncing against the natives of any province upon either of the above points, these people were to be attacked by the hundred and twenty men under Ocampo, and were to be made slaves. Anybody who hoped that Las Casas would so pronounce must, as he intimates, have been somewhat mistaken in his man.¹

The whole of this business must have been exceedingly distasteful to Las Casas; but he saw no other way of accomplishing any part of his object, and prudently availed himself of this.

Near at hand, there lay on his death-bed the man who, of all others, would have sympathized most with Las Casas in his efforts to civilize and convert the poor Indians of the Tierra-firme. This was Pedro de Córdova, who, at the early age of thirty-eight, was now dying of consumption in the monastery of St. Domingo, worn out by the ascetic life he had led. We do not learn whether Las Casas was able to consult "that servant of God," as he always calls him, about the expedition; but, if he had

¹ "And so great was their blindness that they did not observe that the Clerigo (as all knew) having worked and longed, going and coming for five or six years to Castille to Castille (*sic* in MS. [and printed version]) so that they should not be made slaves, and that those who had been made should be liberated, even though they were Caribs and cannibals—who had heard him maintain that to make slaves of them was tyranny—these people indeed cheated themselves who thought that the Clerigo would be the author of these wars."—LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxvi, p. 178.

done so, the dying Father could but have given one reply, as anything must have seemed advisable which promised to hinder the outrages which the men in Ocampo's expedition were inflicting upon the natives of the Tierra-firme.

Pedro de Córdoba departed this life in May 1521.¹ We know, however, that he left one worthy to succeed him in his office, for it is mentioned that Antonio Montesino, already well-known to the readers of this history, preached the funeral sermon on his late prelate, taking for the text, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." This resolute and noble monk, the especial friend of the Indians, no doubt felt as his late prelate would have done about the project of Las Casas. Another motive, too, which would have ensured the concurrence of Pedro de Córdoba, Antonio Montesino, or any of the Dominican fraternity in Hispaniola, with the plans of Las Casas was, that in him they were certain of a protector to any monastery they might found again at Chiribichi, to replace the one which had been swept away in the late outbreak of the Indians.

Meanwhile the provisions were put on board the vessels intrusted to Las Casas by the *audiencia* of San Domingo. These provisions consisted of wine, oil, vinegar, and a great quantity of cheese from the Canary Islands. He had orders to go to the island of Mona, and take on board eleven hundred loaves of cassava bread from the King's stores in that island. He was also well provided with sea-stores of all kinds, and articles of merchandize; and, everything being now ready, in July of that year² he set sail from San Domingo.

Having received his cargo of bread at the island of

¹ [According to a recently written, but not very trustworthy, history of the Dominicans in the Indies (*Isagoge Hist. Apologetico*, Madrid, 1892, p. 301), Pedro de Córdoba died 28th June 1525. He was the first Inquisitor, and Vicar-General of the Indies. It was said of him that "if the fields and stones of Española could speak they would testify to the miracles of this servant of God, to whom the winds and waters were obedient, who quieted the sea, and to whom all things were subject, even the Demon." The *Isagoge* relates many of the wonders worked by him.]

² [1521.]

Mona, he proceeded to Porto Rico for the labourers he had left there. But, as might be expected, not a single man of them was to be found; and the Clerigo had not even the comfort of finding that his humble and simple followers had been employed in the cultivation of the earth, or in any good work, but he learnt that they had enlisted with certain freebooters, whose occupation it was to attack and pillage the Indians.¹ It requires a large experience of mankind before it is ascertained that gentle, simple and ignorant people are not the best persons for keeping their words. It requires some training of the intellect, or discipline of some kind, to make men faithful and true. Had Las Casas been enabled to bring out with him from Spain real knights, men worthy of wearing golden spurs, they might have been true to themselves and to him.² Now he was left to prosecute his enterprize without any body of followers especially attached to him.

Nothing was to be done, however, but to proceed in his voyage to the Tierra-firme. When he arrived there, he found, as might have been foreseen, that Ocampo's men were pillaging and making slaves. They were in great want of provisions, as the Indians fled before them: and, without the assistance of the natives, the Spaniards were never able to purvey adequately for themselves.³ Ocampo was busy founding a town about half a league above the river Cumaná, which he called Nueva Toledo; but even if it had been named New Seville, as Las Casas humorously remarks, the men would not have taken to it any the more. On the arrival of the Clerigo, they all resolved to avail themselves of the licence to return which had been granted beforehand for some of them, and to go home,

¹ [In July 1520 Figueroa wrote to Charles V. that Berrio had brought out thirty-seven families to San Domingo a fortnight before, who had all fallen sick, and that is a probable explanation of the disappearance of a good many of them. In November he wrote again that most of them were ill in a village five miles from San Domingo. It happened to be an unhealthy year, having rained continuously since May.]

² [Señor A. M. Fabié remarks that "for Las Casas to have realised his plans he should have had to do with angels rather than with ordinary human nature."]

³ "Without them the Spaniards were never able anywhere in the Indies to provide sufficiently for themselves."—LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxvi, p. 181.

having no fancy to continue with the Clerigo, being weary of the country, and looking upon him as a bad captain for marauding expeditions. So fearful were they of being detained, that they would never come on shore all at once, but took care to leave twenty men, whom they could depend upon, in the ships.

Furnishing them with provisions for the voyage, Las Casas allowed them to go, but remained himself with a few servants and hired labourers. The polite and witty Ocampo, as might be expected from the feelings that one gentleman would have for another, showed regret at leaving the Clerigo in this deserted state; but was obliged, nevertheless, to take his departure. And now Las Casas, with his great projects, his immense territory, his scanty resources, was indeed alone. Never, perhaps, was there a position which the philanthropic part of mankind would have regarded with more profound concern and more solicitous apprehension.

CHAPTER VII

LAS CASAS ALONE IN THE LAND—RECEIVED IN THE FRANCISCAN MONASTERY—FATE OF HIS COLONY

THE Dominican community, to whom of course Las Casas would first have turned, had, as it appears, been entirely swept away. The Franciscans, however, had returned, and they were the sole nucleus of Christianity and of civilization in that immense expanse of country, a seventh part of the whole world. People are often seeking for romance in all kinds of fiction; but how really romantic such a situation as this was! The light from that monastery, the sound of its bell amidst the wilderness of idolatry, what signs of hope they were—which angels might have watched with unspeakable joy, and yet with apprehension! It must have been no little comfort to Las Casas, at this juncture, to find that the Franciscans had already repaired the ruin which had fallen upon them, together with the rest of the Spaniards in that part of the country. These monks must have re-established themselves under Ocampo's protection; and it does not seem as if their monastery could have suffered anything like the devastation which had come upon the unfortunate and equally innocent Dominicans.

When the Franciscans heard of the Clerigo's arrival, they came out to meet him with great joy, chanting a *Te Deum*. Their little monastery was on the river-side,¹ "a cross-bow-shot" from the sea-shore. It was constructed of wood and thatched with straw; and it had a pleasant garden with orange trees, vines, and melons in it. Las Casas built a large storehouse adjoining the monastery, and there he stowed away his goods. The first thing he did, was to convey his message of peace to the Indians, which he accomplished by means of Donna

¹ The river Cumaná, now called the Manzanares.

Maria (before mentioned as the wife of the Cacique of Cumaná), who knew something of the Spanish language. Through this woman Las Casas informed the Indians that he had been sent by the new King of Spain, and that henceforth they were to experience nothing but kind treatment and good works from the Christians, as an earnest of which, he sent them some of the presents which he had brought from Castille, to gain their friendship.

The founding of a colony is always one of the most interesting things in the world; and it is surprising that rich and powerful men in our own times do not more frequently give themselves to such splendid undertakings. But, in this particular case, the interest is doubled, from the feeling that the leader is no mere adventurer and has no private ambition, but is trying a great experiment for the good of the world. Moreover, one is always curious to see a man in a position which he has long sought for, where he has in some measure to fulfil the day-dreams of his life. The first proceedings of Las Casas seem to have been judicious; and, altogether, though this settlement at Cumaná was but a little one, a mere fragment of the great undertaking which Las Casas had originally designed, still much might have been hoped from it, if there had been no Spaniards near to hinder the good work. Unfortunately, however, there was the island of Cubagua at a short distance from the coast, and, as there was no fresh water there, the Spaniards, engaged in pearl-fishing near that island, had a motive for coming frequently to the river Cumaná in the main land, which was but seven leagues off.

Las Casas, thinking to have some curb upon these Spaniards, engaged with a master mason at the rate of ten ducats a month, to build a fort at the mouth of the river; but the Spaniards of the island, the "apostles of Cubagua," as Las Casas sarcastically calls them, soon perceived the drift of the Clerigo's building, and the builder was bribed, or persuaded, by them, to desist from his work. The visits, therefore, of the Spaniards to the mainland were as uncontrolled as ever. The Indians had no love for these visitors, but then they

136 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

brought wine with them, and this won over even those Indians who had most distaste to the Spaniards. And, just as a child cannot handle with any safety the arms of a grown-up man, so there is always danger for a people when, without fit preparation, it comes to use the products of an older state, whether it be strong wine, or a well-compacted political constitution. To obtain this all-seducing wine, which, or the like of which has ever proved the subtlest and most destructive weapon against aborigines, clearing them off as fire consumes the dry herbage of the prairie, the Indians brought gold and slaves to the Spaniards, the slaves being youths and simple persons.

Of the light way in which such simple persons were made slaves among the Mexicans, and probably among these Indians too, we have a curious instance in the letter of Rodrigo de Albornoze to the Emperor in 1525. He says, that "for very little things and almost in jest they became slaves to one another," and, as an instance, he mentions that when he was once officially examining some slaves, he asked one of them the origin of his slavery,—whether he was the son of slave parents, for instance; and the Indian replied "No, but that one day when they were in the midst of their *areitos*, which is their festival, a man was beating an *ataval*, which they use in their feasts, like those of the Spaniards, and that he wished very much to play upon it, and that the owner would not let him without being paid for it; as he had nothing to give, he said that he would be his slave, and the other let him play the instrument for that one day, and thenceforward he was the other's slave." And Albornoze tells the Monarch, that the existence of such light modes of creating slavery is a thing to be considered "for the sake of Your Majesty's conscience as well as of Your Majesty's service."¹

But to return to the Cubaguans.—There is no doubt that their frequent communication with the Indians of Cumaná was likely to be fatal to the plans of the Clerigo: and so he felt it to be. Their conduct was a practical

¹ *Al* EMPERADOR CARLOS 5°. RODRIGO DE ALBORNOZ, *en* Temistitan á 15 de diciembre, de 1525.—Colección de MUÑOZ, MS., tom. 77.

denial of his message from the King. He went to Cubagua and made most forcible appeals (*requerimientos terribles*) to the Alcalde there: but all to no effect. The chief monk of the Franciscans, Padre Joan de Garceto, saw the matter in the same light as Las Casas, and urged him to go to St. Domingo and to appeal to the *audiencia*, in order to provide some remedy for the evils arising from the visits of the Cubaguans. Two vessels were lading with salt, and the Clerigo, he said, could go in one of them, which would be ready to sail in a month. Las Casas did not see the need for his going; but the Franciscan Father was very urgent about it. Every day they had mass and prayers for inspiration in this matter, and discoursed upon it after prayers. Father Garceto, with true Flemish perseverance, never swerved from his opinion, or from the same expression of it, winding up the discourse by saying, "It does not appear to me, Sir, but that you have to go and seek a remedy for these evils, in the cessation of which so much is at stake."¹

But Las Casas was naturally very unwilling to leave his territory without the protection, slight as it might be, of his presence; and, besides, though this was a smaller matter, he had been entrusted with no small amount of merchandize. He accordingly prepared two sets of papers:—one being a memorandum naming Francisco de Soto captain in the Clerigo's absence, and giving him the necessary instructions; and the other being a despatch, in which an appeal was made to the *audiencia* of St. Domingo for protection from the visits of the Spaniards at Cubagua. This course left it open to Las Casas to change his mind at the final moment of the departure of the ships. At last the day came when it must be decided whether Las Casas was to go or not. Mass was said as usual, and the friends afterwards took counsel together as they were accustomed; when Father Garceto pronounced his unvarying opinion—"Sir, you have to go, and by no means to remain."

Overcome by this perseverance on the part of the Franciscan, which the Clerigo thought might be an ex-

¹ LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxvi, p. 185.

138 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

pression of the will of God, he yielded, but still was not convinced. "God knows," he exclaimed, "how much I do this against my judgment and also against my will, but I am willing to do it, since it seems good to your Reverence; and if it be an error, I would rather err upon the opinion of another man, than succeed by taking my own. Wherefore I hope in God that, since I do not do this thing for any other intent than to perform my duty in that which I have undertaken for His service, He will convert even error into advantage." Hereupon we may remark, that a man seldom makes so signal a blunder as when he acts exceptionally, and contradicts the usual tenor of his life and character. Las Casas was not wont to defer much to other men's opinions, and why he should have given way to this good Franciscan, who knew much less of the world than the Clerigo did, is scarcely explicable, except upon the ground that the Franciscan's arguments were so weak, and his opinion so strong, as to give an appearance of mysterious significance to it, before which a pious man like Las Casas would be more likely to bow than to a well-connected train of reasoning. However, the decision was now arrived at, and he set sail in the salt-carrying vessel bound for St. Domingo, having parted from the Franciscan monks with great grief on their part, and he not being a man, as he well says, alluding to his affectionate disposition, to feel less grief on his part.¹

Las Casas was not fortunate, perhaps not wise, in his choice of agents. Francisco de Soto was a good and prudent man, but poor; and the Clerigo assigns to this poverty all the evils which De Soto was the cause of. The first thing after the departure of Las Casas that Francisco de Soto did, notwithstanding the express written orders (a copy of which orders De Soto had signed) of his master to the contrary, was to send away the only two boats the little colony had, to traffic for pearls, gold, and even for slaves, as some believe. Now the Clerigo, aware to some extent of the temper of the Indians,

¹ "So he departed with great grief on the side of the monks, and he not being a man to feel less."—LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxvi, p. 186.

had given orders to De Soto, not on any account to send away these boats, so that if he should perceive symptoms of hostility in the Indians, he might be able to embark the men and goods in these boats, or the men at least, if there were not time to embark the goods, and thus to save the little colony. One of these boats was fitted with sails; the other was a Moorish rowing-boat with many oars, which the Indians in their language called "the centipede," and of which they were much afraid.

The Indians had not had time to appreciate the motives or the purposes of Las Casas. Nothing but evil had hitherto come to them from converse with the Spaniards. The pearl-fishers of Cubagua had not ceased to molest the natives of Cumaná; and now, whether moved by former, yet recent, injuries, or by new insults received after the Clerigo's departure; or whether, as he also conjectures, they were by the decrees of Providence not destined to receive the blessings of the gospel, they resolved to make an onslaught upon the settlement. Twelve days had not elapsed since Las Casas had sailed, before the Franciscan brotherhood discerned the symptoms of coming danger; and they asked Donna Maria whether their suspicions were just or not, to which, as some of her countrymen were present, who might make out something of the conversation, she replied with her voice "No," but with her eyes she said "Yes."

At this point of time a Spanish vessel touched at the coast, and the servants of the Clerigo begged to be taken on board; but, whether from fear or malice, the masters of the vessel would not listen to the request; and the little colony was left to its fate.

The poor Franciscan monks and the Clerigo's lieutenant roamed about now in all the agony of fear and indecision, endeavouring to find out, by going from one Indian hut to another, when the blow was to take place. On the fourteenth day after the departure of Las Casas, they discovered that the attack was to be made on the following morning; and then at last they resolved to fortify the monastery and the adjoining storehouse. With that

purpose they placed round the building the twelve or fourteen guns which they possessed ; but on examination they found at this critical juncture that their powder was damp.

Early on the ensuing morning (this was now the third day after warning had come to them from the eyes of the kind-hearted Indian woman), and while they were drying their powder in the sun, the Indians with a terrible war-whoop rushed down upon them. Two or three of the Clerigo's servants were killed at the first onset: the rest, with the Franciscans, made good the entrance to the monastery. The Indians, however, succeeded in setting it on fire. But fortunately, there was a postern door that led into the enclosed garden before mentioned, which was surrounded by a hedge of canes. Another door from the garden led out upon the bank of the river. At the moment of attack Francisco de Soto happened to be in the Indian *pueblo* of Cumaná, which was situated on the sea-shore, a very short distance from the monastery. As soon as he perceived what was going on, he fled to the monastery, but in his flight was wounded by a poisoned arrow. He succeeded, however, in making his way into the garden with the other Spaniards. At the distance of a "stone's-throw" there was a little creek, where the monks had a canoe of their own which would hold fifty persons. They gained this canoe, and pushed off down the river, while the Indians thought they were being burnt in the monastery. The number of persons in the canoe was about fifteen, or twenty, including all of Las Casas's servants and all the Franciscan monks, with the exception of one lay-brother, who at the first war-whoop of the Indians had fled, and thrown himself into a bed of canes. He now made his appearance high up upon the bank: his friends in the boat did their utmost to get to the place where he was, but the stream was very strong against them. He, poor man, very nobly made signs to them, not to attempt to return; and they left him to his fate. All this must have taken some time, and the Indians now caught sight of the boat. Instantly they manned a light boat of their own, lighter than the canoe, called a *piragua*, set off in pursuit, and soon gained upon

the Spaniards, whose object was to pull for the port of Araya, two leagues and a half across the gulf (of Cariaco). They pulled as men pulling for their lives, but the swift *piragua* still gained upon them; and they had not proceeded more than a league, when they saw that their only chance was to take to the shore again, and throw themselves into one of the dense beds of cactus with which that coast abounds. The *piragua* and the canoe landed not "a quoit's-throw" from each other. Happily there was time enough for the Spaniards to take refuge amongst the cactuses, pervious to despair, but otherwise hardly to be penetrated by a fully-armed man. The Indians were naked, and though they made great efforts to get at the Spaniards in this "thorn fortress," they could not do so,¹ though they were at one time very near to them, so near that Father Joan Garceto lived to tell Las Casas,—how one Indian was close upon him, and lifted up his club (*macana*) to kill him, and the Father bent his knees, and shut his eyes, and raised his heart to God; but when he looked up, there was no one. Finally, in the course of the next day, they got to their countrymen's ships. De Soto died of the wounds which he had received, as the arrows were poisoned. The other servants of Las Casas, all but the two or three who perished at the first onset, together with the Franciscans, arrived in a short time at St. Domingo.

All this happened in little more than a fortnight after the Clerigo's departure. Meanwhile, he himself had been carried by the ignorance of his mariners far beyond the port of St. Domingo: he had to waste two months in beating against contrary currents; and finally he landed on another part of the island of Hispaniola. As he was travelling thence to St. Domingo in company with other persons, and they were taking their *siesta* on the bank of a river, and he was asleep under a tree, a party from the city came up to them, and, being asked the news, said

¹ "And as the Indians were naked from head to foot they were a long time in managing the short distance that separated them from the laymen and the monks. And it seems that the thicket was so dense that they could not wriggle through it."—LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxvi, p. 189.

that the Indians of the Pearl Coast had killed the Clerigo Bartolomé de Las Casas and all his household. Those who journeyed with the Clerigo said, "We are witnesses that that is impossible." While they were disputing, Las Casas awoke to hear this news; and, versed in misfortune as he was, this must have been the most fatal intelligence he ever received, and the most difficult to bear, for, though he was sure enough that some of it was untrue, yet he could easily divine that some terrible disaster had happened to his little colony. Afterwards, he came to look upon the event as a judgment upon him for having acted in company with men whose only object had been self-enrichment, saying, "that though God uses human means to bring about his ends, yet that such helps (*adminículos*) are not needed for preaching the gospel." "Still," as he urges on the other side, "if he was in such haste to accept the offer of the *audiencia*, it was but to prevent the slaughter and destruction which Ocampo's expedition was occasioning."

Meanwhile, in great anxiety to hear the whole of the bad news, he approached the city of St. Domingo, and when near there, some "good Christians," friends of his, came out to meet and console him, offering him money, even as much as four or five thousand ducats, for a new attempt to colonize.

But none was to be made: and here, not without much regret at such an ending, we take leave of any further hopes from the Clerigo's noble attempt at colonization; and must content ourselves with being rejoiced that he returned in safety from the Indians of the Pearl Coast, who little knew the disservice they had been doing to their ill-fated race, in thrusting away from them its greatest benefactor.



GERARD MERCATOR'S MAP, A.D. 1541.

CHAPTER VIII

LAS CASAS BECOMES A DOMINICAN MONK—THE PEARL COAST IS RAVAGED

THE transactions narrated in the preceding chapter did not pass without much comment, and, amongst other comment, that of contemporary historians, who have given a most unjust and inaccurate version of the whole affair. It affords them great amusement to talk of the "smock-frock soldiers" of the Clerigo, and of the labourers dressed like Knights of Calatrava; but, as we have seen from his own account, which he says is "the pure truth" (*la verdad pura*), none of these labourers went to Cumaná, and, if they had gone there, it was not from their body that the knights were to have been chosen. There were also other statements made by these historians equally false, which Las Casas takes the pains of refuting.

If the writer of this narrative may be permitted to fancy himself addressing Las Casas (and a fearful consideration it is, that historical writers and the people they write about may some day be brought into each others' presence), he would say, "You need not have spent so many pages of your valuable history in confuting what has been written on the subject of your expedition, with manifest ill-nature, by Gomara, or, in the spirit of mere worldliness, by Oviedo. But I should like to suggest to you (having been made wise by the event), that, when you had once collected this body of labourers together, and had brought them to Porto Rico, you should not have let them disperse; but, instead of going to the *audiencia* at St. Domingo (never likely to be friendly to you), to prevent the ill-effects of Ocampo's expedition, you should have accompanied him at once to Cumaná.

"It was certain that his expedition would render the Indians intolerant of your designs; and you could hardly hope to be in time to check his proceedings by orders from

St. Domingo. Besides, according to your own account, Ocampo was a witty, gracious, agreeable man, an old friend of yours; and had you accompanied him on the voyage, and told him the real feelings of powerful people at court, and then addressed such offers of personal advantage to himself, as I think you might have made, you would perhaps have gained him over. Then at the head of your two or three hundred colonists, and with your own vessels and outfit, you would have been more powerful than you ever were afterwards, though armed with letters from the *audiencia*. I speak, as I said before, with all the easy wisdom gained by knowing the event; and am aware of the foolishness of most criticism upon action. Moreover, I can thoroughly understand your aversion to bring your great scheme into any contact with what was avowedly an avenging, and was likely to be a marauding, expedition.

"I forbear to dwell much upon your rare and unfortunate modesty in yielding to the advice of Father Garceto, and forsaking your little colony, at a time when the presence of one earnest and vigorous man was worth a wilderness of orders from the *audiencia*, which, as you must have known, lost some of their force in every league that they were borne from the centre of authority, until at last in the *llanos*, or the forests, of the *Tierra-firme*, these missives were little better than so much waste-paper."

From the molestation of such remarks, in which, however, criticism is meant to be tempered by profound respect, Las Casas was, in all probability, quite free. He wrote to the King, to Cardinal Adrian (by this time advanced to the Papacy, though Las Casas did not know it), and to his other Flemish friends, to tell them what had happened; and then waited till their answers should arrive from Spain.

His thoughts at this period of his life must have been very bitter,—crowded with infinite regrets, and full of fearful anticipations. The prize that had been ever hovering before him was so great—the safety and pacification of vast territories and numerous populations:—the hindrances

that had fatally thwarted him were so disproportionately, so malignantly small. The truth is, that for great enterprizes, and even in the conduct of common life, it seems as if two souls were needed: the one to watch, while the other sleeps; one to do the worldly work, the other the spiritual; and each to cheer the other with a perfect sympathy. Had Las Casas met with but one man having a soul like his own, who would have been a real lieutenant to him, the obstacles in his way, fearful as they were, might have been doubled, and yet his end have been attained. But what could be hoped from men like Berrio or De Soto, who manifestly possessed none, or next to none, of the spirit and intelligence of their leader?

Harmonious conjoint action was then, as it is now, the greatest difficulty in the world.

Happily, there is an end to all things. Human endeavour ends in conquest, or in defeat, and, in case of either being carried to an extreme, is apt to sink into insensibility. There is the swooning limit to mental, as well as to bodily, endurance. It is most picturesque, and seems grandest, when this is the death-swoon; and when a man's good fortunes, his energies, and his life all unite in falling down together before some great calamity. And, if such had now been the case with the heroic Clerigo, it could have been no matter of surprize to any one who had traced his career up to this fatal period.

Of his power to endure and to persevere, the history of the Indies, if faithfully told, will convince every reader. Indeed, in this power lay the peculiarity of his character, and it was that which marked him out from other men of his time as much perhaps as his benevolence. This kind of perseverance is much more rare than people suppose, and is so hard to maintain, that we cannot but admire even bad men, who silently, resolutely, enduringly pursue some evil object of self-interest, or mere glory, through long and toilsome years. Rarer even than profound attention in the intellect is this kind of pertinacity in the moral powers. Each day brings its own interests with it, and makes its claims very loudly upon the men of that day. But a man with a great social purpose,

like Las Casas, has to work on at something, which, for any given day, appears very irrelevant and makes him seem very obtrusive. This unwelcome part he must perform amidst the disgust and weariness of all other people,—through weeks, months, years perhaps, of the most dire discouragement,—when all the while life seems too short for a great purpose, and when he feels the tide of events ebb by him, and nothing accomplished. The spectre of Death cowers in his pathway, and whenever he has time to think away from his subject, occurs to threaten him. But all these vexations and hindrances are as nothing when compared with the weariness and want of elastic power which arise from that terrible familiarity with their subject, which, in the case of most persons, unless they have very deep and very imaginative souls, grows over and incrusts, like a fungus, the life of their original purposes. There are everywhere men of an immense capacity for labour, if their duties are such as come to them day by day to be done, and are connected with self-advancement or renown; but that man is somewhat of a prodigy who is found, in self-appointed labour, as earnest, as strenuous, and as fresh for his work, as those who receive impulses daily renewed which keep them up to their appointed tasks.

Such considerations demand our attention when contemplating the career of such a remarkable man as Las Casas. The age in which he lived was one of singular movement; and his was a mind capable of great versatility, and inclined to take an interest in many things. Wars with France, conquests in Italy, contests with England, civil commotions about the liberties of the Spanish Parliaments, the suppression of heretics, dire strife throughout the Germanic Empire, and hard contested battles with the Moors, were all of them subjects, that in their turn agitated Charles the Fifth and his ministers. Vast discoveries of unknown lands, unheard of treasures in gold and precious stones, new animals, new men, new trees, the most wild and fanciful forms of life, extraordinary changes of fortune, and romantic adventures, were the daily topics in the Indies. This remarkable man, Las Casas, heard all these things,

sympathized with all men's feelings about them; but hardly, I conceive, for any single day, omitted to do something in promoting the fixed purpose of his life. Walking about amongst his fellow-men in that tremendous and saddening solitude in which a great idea enwraps a great man; feeling that all his efforts, even if successful, might be so too late; it is to be wondered that such a man retained his sanity, and that we are cognizant but of one long fit of dire despondency in a life of such unwearied effort, such immense successes, and such overpowering disappointments.

The present was the lowest point of depression that the resolute mind of Las Casas ever sounded.

In recounting the latter part of his story as a colonist, a certain hopelessness creeps in upon his narrative. Perhaps the Indians are by the profound ways of Providence ordained to be destroyed, as many other nations have been; perhaps the Spaniards are not to be saved from the commission of great wickedness and from decay of their power; perhaps his own merits were not such as to warrant his being the man chosen to save the one nation, or to redeem the other.¹ Thus he argues. He intimates that he should have gone back to Spain to seek new remedies, had he possessed the means; and that, if he had done so, the whole course of events in the Indies might have been greatly changed for the better. I think it is evident, however, that it was not strictly want of means (did not his friends come out to meet him, proffering money?), but that the hopeful spirit,

¹ "But, in truth, God did not implant in him the conviction that he would be successful, either because he did not merit it, or because these races are, by the inscrutable judgments of Providence, to be destroyed as many others have been; or because as well our people are not so quickly to get quit of the consequences of the atrocious sins they have committed against these tribes."—LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxvi, p. 198.

[A modern writer says impressively in the same sense, "It may have been ordained by Higher Law that the aborigines of the New World should melt away and give place to the civilization and Christianity of the Old World, but woe to that nation or those people through whom such a tragedy was executed."—*The New Laws of the Indies*, 1542-3. Lond. 1893. Introduction.]

which had been the mainstay of his life, was now deficient in him. Had he been a weak, a selfish, or not a religious man, he would have been absolutely broken-hearted. He was probably as utterly cast down as a good man can be: and I conjecture that he suffered under that abject, nervous depression which results from extreme distress of mind or prolonged overwork, and which none but those who have suffered something like it can imagine.

There are but small indications of the mental sufferings which Las Casas went through at this period of his life. As a gentleman, a scholar, an ecclesiastic, above all, as a Castillian, Las Casas was not likely to spread out the sorrows of his soul on the pages of his history; but enough is there, even in the restrained tone of the narrative, to show how his ardent nature must for the moment have been crushed into torpor by misfortune.

The kind Dominicans, his old friends, received him into their monastery. There I fancy him sitting in some retired nook in their garden, thinking at times of the similar garden at Cumaná, or of the court at Barcelona, Valladolid, or Saragossa, and the great men he had seen and heard there;—then of his old enemy the Bishop of Burgos, whereupon the tears come into his eyes, for, in the bitterest encounters, there is a tenderness which is to come out hereafter. And, besides, he thinks the Bishop would not exult over him now, but would be rather sorry than otherwise. He has sat so long (the once restless man!) that the timid lizard has hurriedly rustled by him many times. And now, with measured step, comes one of his kind hosts, and seats himself on the bench beside him, — a certain Father Betanzos, whom the Clerigo had known for several years, a grey-haired young man, grey from his terrible penances in other lands, who will hereafter be a most prominent figure in the history of the New World. And now the good monk, alluding perhaps to some speech which the Clerigo had uttered in the first bitterness of his disappointment, about retiring from the world, exalts the theme, impresses upon him the paramount necessity for a man to consider his own soul and what he can do to

save that, tells him he has done enough for the Indians, and delicately hints that the Clerigo does not seem to be the chosen vessel for the conversion of these nations: to which, in his intense humiliation, Las Casas makes but a poor reply, and, indeed, thinks it must all be true. And then the severe young monk moves away, quite satisfied that he has done a very serviceable thing for the soul of his friend.¹

Whether the rest of the above picture is to the life, or not, at any rate we know that the brethren did solicit him to become one of themselves. He pleaded that he had written to the King, to Cardinal Adrian, and to others of his Flemish friends; and that he must await their answers. "What would it profit you, if you should die before their answers come?" replied Father Betanzos.² From this it appears as if Las Casas had been ill, although he mentions no illness at this point of his narrative. I conjecture, therefore, that it was the temporary abeyance of the energy within him, which looked like the precursor of death. Hopeless for the moment of gaining his great object, sick of the world, and beginning to ponder more frequently on the state of his soul,³ he yielded to the wishes of the friendly monks, and received the tonsure, to the great joy of the brethren, and also of the inhabitants of St. Domingo, but for very different reasons, as he remarks—the former no doubt rejoicing to gain a distinguished and good man for their brotherhood, the latter delighting to see a man interned, as they thought, in a monastery, who had been in the habit of hindering them in all the robberies and wickedness which they had been wont to commit for their "iniquitous temporal interests."

Afterwards letters for him did come from court, breathing kind encouragement and invitation from his friends the Flemings: but his superiors did not show him these

¹ "A Father named Fray Domingo de Betanzos, strict in virtue and of famed piety, tried many times to persuade him to become a monk."—LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxvi, p. 198.

² LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxvi, p. 198.

³ "These words pierced the soul of the Clerigo Casas, and from that time he began to think more frequently of his condition."—LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxvi, p. 198.

150 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

letters, for fear of disquieting his mind. Letters also came from Pope Adrian for the Clerigo, but it was when he could no longer dispose of himself.¹ If he had gone to Spain, it is probable, as he would have found King Charles there, that he might have succeeded in some new enterprize of colonization.² But this was not to be; and for some years he remained in the monastery of St. Domingo, moving in the narrow circle of his duties there, and, as we are told, writing his history³ of the Indies.

¹ LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxvi, p. 199.

² Las Casas would have been well able to prove that his failure had not arisen from any palpable fault of his. Although his own history has been the authority mainly referred to in the foregoing account of his attempt at colonization, it entirely coincides with what remains of the official narrative, sent in to the Emperor by his Majesty's contador, who accompanied Las Casas. This officer describes the opposition which Las Casas met with from the Governor of Cubagua, the desertion of Ocampo's armada, the ruin that on three occasions fell upon the monks, who, he says, have received glorious deaths (*han recibido muertes admirables*); and he estimates the number of slaves at 600, who were made on that coast previously to Las Casas reaching it:—"I saw in Española that in the space of two months more than six hundred slaves were brought from the parts to which Casas went, and they were sold by the officials in San Domingo."—*Representacion del CONTADOR REAL (MIGUEL CASTELLANOS) que fué con CASAS a Cumana*.—QUINTANA, *Apéndices á la Vida de Las Casas*, No. 9.

[Castellanos says that Ocampo's men contemptuously refused to stay with Las Casas, but went trading and slave-hunting, "making no account of the said Casas or of anyone else." As Castellanos was more interested in the injury to the royal revenue than in the failure of the Clerigo's hopes, his undesigned agreement with Las Casas is particularly valuable.]

³ It is generally said by QUINTANA, and other learned men, that Las Casas commenced his history at this period in the monastery of St. Domingo. Their assertion may be founded upon some fact which has escaped my observation. The only dates I can refer to, in reference to this point, where LAS CASAS speaks of the times of his writing, are as follows. In the Prologue there is a passage, quoted below, in which he speaks as if that were written in 1552. In lib. 3, cap. 155, he mentions the year 1560, as the time of his writing; and, in the last sentence but one of his history, he gives the date 1561, as the time at which he is then writing:—"Nobody can reasonably refuse to admit that *at the present day, that is, in the year 1552*, there are deeds done as miserable as those of past times." He may, however, at a very early period, have begun to collect and prepare his materials for writing, amongst which may be numbered some of the most

RESULTS OF LAS CASAS'S FAILURE 151

Profiting so much as we do by this history, still it must be regretted that Las Casas should have been thus occupied; and, however desirable it might be that he should regard his soul, I cannot but regret, in somewhat of a secular spirit, that he should have been taken away for the present from the civil administration of the Indies, which gained one more devout man, and lost that much rarer character, a profoundly and perseveringly philanthropic reformer, of which latter character the Indies had then far more need than all the rest of the world put together.

It is doubtful, moreover, whether his studies at the monastery did not do far more harm than good to his faculty for historical writing. It must, I conjecture, have been at this period, that he studied those works which enabled him to confuse his narrative with inappropriate learning. Before his becoming a monk, I imagine he knew little of what Pliny, Diodorus Siculus, Dionysius Halicarnassensis, Aristotle, the Master of the Sentences, or other learned writers, whose names infest his pages, had said upon any subject. It is not to be forgotten, however, that, while Las Casas dwelt in monastic retreat, he probably acquired that knowledge of the Fathers and the Schoolmen, which enabled him to battle so successfully before kings and princes with the most learned persons of his time, using the favourite scholastic weapons of that age.

Returning to the history of the unfortunate province of Cumaná, it is impossible not to be struck with the great amount of mischief that ensued from the failure of Las Casas, and from the events which led to that failure. The land was now cleared of monasteries, and of the civilization which the religious orders brought with them.¹ An

valuable documents that ever existed as sources of early American history. The one which I should most like to have seen was TOVILLA's *Historia Barbárica*, of which, I believe, there is now no trace.

[The editors of the printed version of the history in the *Colección de Documentos Inéditos para la Historia de España*, decide that it was commenced in 1552 and finished in 1561.]

¹ This civilization may be judged of by the fact that Juan Garceto

expedition was sent by the Admiral of the Indies, who had returned to his government of Hispaniola, to chastise the Indians, and to enable the Spaniards in Cubagua to pursue with safety their occupation of pearl-fishing. This expedition was placed under the command of Jacomé Castellon, a vigorous captain, who "fought the Indians, recovered the country, restored the fisheries, and filled Cubagua, and even St. Domingo, with slaves."¹ Such is the description of Gomara, and such was his idea of success, for he puts the conduct of this commander in favourable contrast with that of Ocampo and Las Casas.

But even this miserable ideal of success was not maintained, as may be seen from the subsequent history of the Spanish conquest on the coast of Cumaná. The Spaniards did not succeed in recovering the country, or in restoring the pearl-fisheries. One governor continued to supersede another, without effecting any permanent good for himself, for the Spaniards, or for the Indians. Their history is but a tissue of stupid enormities, reminding the reader of certain melancholy periods in the history of France and Italy, when all the worst passions of men were let loose for the smallest ends; and when intrigues, revolts, massacres, and murders followed one another, without any man, or any set of men, being the better for such things, even in this world. I will not vex the reader with an account of the transactions² of these

was able to preach to the Indians of the Pearl Coast in their own language, as appears from the memorial addressed to the King by the contador who accompanied the expedition of Las Casas:—"It would be of great benefit to send them a governor and monks to repair the mischiefs done to the Indians, especially two Franciscans who are in the Island of Pearls, of whom one, Fray Juan Garceto, preaches to them in their own tongue."—QUINTANA, *Apéndices á la Vida de Las Casas*.

¹ GOMARA, *Hist. de las Indias*, cap. 78.

² Their doings are to be found in PEDRO SIMON'S *Noticias Historiales*, primera parte; and CAULIN, *Hist. de la Nueva Andalucía*.

DE LAET, speaking of expeditions made by one or more of these governors, thus expresses himself:—"From all these expeditions, in which nothing memorable is met with, it may be imagined that there was nothing in these parts meriting so much labour; but considering the eagerness of the Spaniards for such enterprises, it is not astonishing that they undertook them, for they were accustomed to find among

governors; nor is it worth while to encumber the page of history with their unfortunate names. Indeed, all along that immense line of coast which stretches from the mouths of the river Orinoco to the Isthmus of Panamá, it might for a long time be said of each respective governor, in the language of Scripture, not taking it literally, perhaps, but adopting the spirit of the passage, that he "wrought evil in the eyes of the Lord, and did worse than all that were before him."¹

There is a narrative, however, which will immediately and adequately convey to the reader's mind the state of things that existed for hundreds of miles along the coast of Cumaná, at a period of twenty years after the failure of the Clerigo's enterprize. The first place which the celebrated Italian traveller, Benzoni, landed at was the island of Cubagua. Jerome Benzoni was a young man who had come out, not merely to see the New World, but to make his fortune.² The Governor of Cubagua, a certain Geronimo Ortal, held out bright hopes to the young Italian if he would join him in an expedition into a province in the interior, which was called Dorado. The young man accepted the Governor's proposal. A very few days after this, the Governor of the island of Margarita came over to Cubagua; and the two Governors arranged to have a joint expedition with the object of hunting for slaves. Benzoni accompanied these Spanish authorities: and though, like a young man, he was ready to have a hand in anything that was going on, he appears to have been well aware of the atrocity of the proceed-

the Indians, gold, silver, and other things of value, collected in bulk without the trouble of delving for them, and were able to travel further without stopping at the places where there was nothing to be obtained. That is why it is no wonder in so many expeditions they have not discovered more of those things which customarily draw men to the close examination of a country.³—*Novus Orbis*, lib. 18, cap. 7.

¹ 1 *Kings*, chap. 16, ver. 25, 30.

² "When I was a youth twenty-two years of age, being like many others anxious to see the world, and hearing of . . . the New World, I determined to go there; and not less was I desirous of making a fortune, than of seeing the New World."—BENZONI, *Hist. Novi Orbis*, lib. 1, cap. 1.

[He went out in 1541.]

ings, which he relates as tenderly as if he had been bred up by Las Casas himself.

The expedition, setting off one morning from Cubagua, landed in the evening of the same day at the mouth of the river Cumaná, the present Manzanares. This was the very spot where the Franciscan monastery, with its pleasant gardens once stood. Jacomé Castellon's fort, built upon the site of the Clerigo's, had been washed away; but another had been erected in its place, or near it, for it was still necessary to secure a watering-place for the inhabitants of Cubagua, where water was so scarce, that a cask of wine was often exchanged for a cask of water. The pearl-fishery, however, had ceased entirely, or had ceased to be productive.¹ Where the witty Ocampo had sought to build his town of Nueva Toledo, there stood now four or five huts, constructed of reeds. The whole of the coast was desolate, and, of the numerous population which once gladdened those shores, scarcely any remained except a few poor Indian Chiefs, whose presence was a sign of still greater desolation, as they were kept there only for the purpose of assisting the Spaniards in their slave-hunts.²

The first care of this marauding expedition was to move towards the east, along the Gulf of Cariaco, to a part of the country where the Spaniards had alliances with the Indian Chiefs. There, with the inducements of a little wine, a little linen, or a few knives, they procured guides. Then commenced a hunt that led the Spaniards through the wildest tracts of country, which Benzoni thinks that foxes would have hesitated to enter. The cruel hunters, like wild beasts, made their forays more by night than by day, and, in the course of a march of a hundred miles, they succeeded in capturing two hundred and forty Indians, males and females, children

¹ "A defence of earth had been formerly built on this spot by Jacomé Castellon when the pearl-fishery flourished."—BENZONI, *Hist. Novi Orbis*, lib. 1, cap. 2.

² "The Spaniards had now desolated nearly the whole of that coast, and out of so many Indians, formerly so numerous, hardly any were to be found except a few poor Chiefs preserved by the Spaniards that they might assist in the business of getting slaves."—BENZONI, *Hist. Novi Orbis*, lib. 1, cap. 2.

and grown-up people (*mares ac fœminas, puberes ac impuberes*).

The fear lest their provisions should fall short induced the leader to command a retreat. The Indians endeavoured to cut them off, but unsuccessfully; and the Spaniards gained the coast without molestation. When there, another mode of hunting was adopted. During the daytime the Spaniards hid themselves amidst the dense foliage, or behind the rocks near the sea-coast; and when the Indians came down to fish, the Spaniards rushed out of their hiding places and generally contrived to capture the fishers, who appear to have been mostly women and children.¹ This mode of prey could not long remain undiscovered. No more Indian women came down to fish, and the Spaniards were driven to try new methods.

For this purpose their leader went to the house of a friendly Indian Chief, and, with the usual knives and trumpery, sought to negotiate with him, and by his means to make another profitable entrance into the country. This Chief, however, would not allow the Christians to accompany him,² but, taking some of his followers, went himself into some neighbouring territory and returned the next day, bringing sixteen Indians with their hands bound behind their backs, whom he delivered to the Spanish Commander. The coast of Cariaco was now considered to have been sufficiently ravaged for the present; and the expedition returned to Cumaná. When they had all arrived there, the Indian allies took leave of the Spaniards, but, as might naturally be expected, these allies were waylaid on their return by the tribes whose homes they had assisted to desolate. Thereupon they came back to Cumaná, begging for assistance from the Christians, in order to avenge themselves upon the common enemy. The Spanish Commander, though by word and gesture he showed great sympathy for his Indian friends, nevertheless declared that for the present he could not do anything for them, having a work

¹ "In this way we caught upwards of fifty, the greater part women with their little children."—BENZONI, *Hist. Novi Orbis*, lib. 1, cap. 2.

² BENZONI, *Hist. Novi Orbis*, lib. 1, cap. 2.

156 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

of greater moment on hand. If, however, the hostile Indians should persevere in attacking them, he promised that he would avenge their injuries, as soon as he was able to do so. With this reply they departed in much disgust, saying bitter things about the rapine of the Christians, who had been the cause of so many evils to them.

This "work of greater moment" was nothing more than a foray along the western coast, for which, in a few days, the whole marauding body started from Cumaná, and arrived at the town of Maracapána. This Indian town, already celebrated for the iniquitous proceedings of Alonso de Ojeda which had taken place in its neighbourhood,¹ was now to be the scene of greater iniquities, and indeed had become an abiding place for such iniquities. It was now more of a Spanish than an Indian town. It contained forty houses occupied by four hundred Spanish inhabitants, who lived by predatory excursions, and were little else than a band of robbers of the worst description. Every year these ruffians chose a leader from amongst themselves, who, taking with him half the number of his associates, and a great body of the Indians inhabiting the coasts of that bay, set off to ravage the territories of the adjacent Indian tribes.² While Benzoni was in Maracapána one of these expeditions, as I conjecture,—certainly an expedition of the same nature,—returned to the town bringing no fewer than four thousand slaves. And would that this were anything like the number that had been torn from their homes,—for toil, scarcity of provisions,

¹ The original cause, as we have seen, of the great rising of the Indians, the consequent expulsion of the Dominicans and the Franciscans, the ill-fated expedition of Ocampo, and the failure of the Clerigo's plan of colonization.

² [In 1526 Charles V. had issued a strongly-worded decree that the ecclesiastics attached to expeditions were "very diligently and carefully to see that the Indians are well treated, regarding and treating them as of kin (proximos), and not allowing any injuries, robberies, or bad treatment; and if anything be done to the contrary by any person, justice shall be done according to law without regard to quality or condition." (*Recopilacion de Leyes . . . de las Indias*, Bk. iv, Tit. iv, Ley. v.). An earlier law of 1523 forbade the Spaniards to make war upon them without the licence of the governing authority. But practically all these laws were but idle words.]

the bitterness of captivity, and the terrible nature of the journey had greatly thinned the number of the captives; and some of those who were unequal to the journey had been put to death on the road. I cannot but quote the exact words of the Italian traveller, which, curiously enough, recall to mind the words used by the Portuguese chronicler¹ who saw the first cargo of negro slaves arrive at Lagos. "That miserable band of slaves was indeed a foul and melancholy spectacle to those who beheld it: men and women debilitated by hunger and misery, their bodies naked, lacerated, and mutilated. You might behold the wretched mothers, lost in grief and tears, dragging two or three children after them, or carrying them upon their necks and shoulders, and the whole band connected together by ropes or iron chains around their necks or arms or hands."²

The Spaniards who conducted this troop had traversed no less than seven hundred miles, into regions which, on their first discovery, were largely populated, but which, "when I came there," says Benzoni, "were nearly reduced to a solitary desert."

From the same eye-witness we learn the fate of these slaves. They were carried to the island of Cubagua, where the fifth was taken for the King. The letter C. was branded upon all of them—the initial, I suppose, of Charles the Fifth, himself a truly humane man, who, except in matters of religion, and that only in his latter days, was as sparing of human life as he was of all other good material, and who certainly always manifested the kindest consideration for his Indian subjects. The great bulk of the captives were then exchanged for wine, corn, and other necessities; nor did these accursed marauders hesitate to make a saleable commodity of that for which a man should be ready to lay down his own life in defence—namely, the child that is about to be born to him.³

Then came the horrors of the passage, doubly horrible,

¹ AZURARA, cap. 25, quoted before in this history.

² BENZONI, *Hist. Novi Orbis*, lib. i, cap. 3.

³ "And even when some of the Indian women are pregnant by these same Spaniards they sell them without any remorse."—BENZONI, *Hist. Novi Orbis*, lib. i, cap. 3.

158 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

as Benzoni notices, to many of these Indians, because they were from the inland countries (*mediterranei homines, navigandi tædium ægrè tolerantes*); and there, in the foulness and heat of these little vessels, the wretched gangs of slaves ended their unhappy days.¹

The expedition to El Dorado, in which Benzoni was engaged to take a part, was cut short by his patron, the Spanish Governor of Cubagua, being put under arrest by orders from the *audiencia* of St. Domingo. Benzoni himself fell ill; and, I trust, in his illness thought seriously over his partnership in these evil deeds, in which he partook no more.

I have chosen this narrative of a private individual, as affording a better insight into the state of that unfortunate coast of South America than could be given by a very elaborate account of the proceedings of the various governors, which would necessarily be mixed up with many political and civil events, unimportant in themselves, and of little direct bearing on the subject, while this short but vivid narrative of the Italian traveller brings the social state of the Spanish and Indian communities on that coast clearly,—too clearly,—before us.

One hundred years had to pass away, from that time, before the first patent of those missions which were destined to civilize and Christianize New Andalusia was issued. It bears date 1644, and was granted in consequence of the demand of a soldier (name unknown), who begged that Franciscan monks might be sent to those parts, offering himself to teach them the language, and to provide the funds.²

¹ "They suffer severely the sea horrors, and not being allowed to move out of those sinks, what with their sickness and their other wants, they have to stand in the filth like animals; and the sea often being calm, water and other provisions fail them, so that the poor wretches, oppressed by the heat, the stench, the thirst, and the crowding, miserably expire there below in the holds of the ships."—BENZONI, *Hist. Novi Orbis*, lib. 1, cap. 3.

² "Let there come here six or eight Franciscan monks to whom I will teach the language of the natives very willingly, and support them that they may be able to learn, and so bring this people to our holy

In the course of his memorial, the good soldier mentions that certain letters were wanting in the language of these Indians, and, "as these letters were not to be found in their alphabet, so," he adds, "in these men themselves were not to be found truth or shame, the knowledge of God, or Faith, or Loyalty, or Law."¹

And this was "the earthly Paradise" of Columbus,—a land which the Italian traveller considered as the most beautiful and fertile of all that he beheld in the Indies, but which was reduced to such a state of barbarism by misgovernment, that it literally passed out of the notice and memory of man, and lay, as it were, forgotten for whole generations.

This, too, was the coast which the benevolent Pedro de Córdova and the indefatigable Las Casas had taken into their adoption, and which they would have made a paradise for the Indians, had they been suffered to do so. That their efforts should have failed is only another reason for recording them. Success tells its own story. Besides, to chronicle such failure is to encourage other men in like reverses, who must learn to perceive that the evil around them is deprived of none of its natural influence for the sake of promoting their endeavours, and that no special success, discernible at least to our eyes, waits upon an enterprize because it is undertaken from the noblest motives, and carried on with the uttermost self-sacrifice. If it were otherwise, what a mere miserable nursling the highest human endeavour would become.

Catholic Faith. I will teach them by means of a grammar that I have prepared for the purpose, and will assist them day and night until, with the help of God, they are competent."—CAULIN, *Hist. de la Nueva Andalucía*, lib. 3, cap. 1.

¹ "They are the following: B. D. F. L. R. And as these letters were not to be found," etc.—CAULIN, *Hist. de la Nueva Andalucía*, l. 3, c. 1.

BOOK X

HERNANDO CORTES

CHAPTER I

THE EXPEDITIONS PRIOR TO THAT OF CORTES—HIS EARLY LIFE
—HIS APPOINTMENT TO THE COMMAND OF AN EXPEDITION
—SETS SAIL FROM SANTIAGO

THE course of this narrative brings us to a hero of a very different kind from Las Casas, who for the present lies dormant in his monastery. The leader, whose daring deeds require now to be chronicled, was a thorough adventurer, a very politic statesman, and an admirable soldier. He was cruel at times in conduct but not in disposition; he was sincerely religious, profoundly dissembling, courteous, liberal, amorous, decisive. There was a certain grandeur in all his proceedings. He was very fertile in resources, and, while he looked far forward, he was at the same time almost madly audacious in his enterprizes. This strange mixture of valour, religion, policy, and craft was a peculiar product of that century.

The conquest of Mexico could hardly have been achieved at this period under any man of less genius than that which belonged to Hernando Cortes, who is the hero in question. And even his genius would probably not have attempted the achievement, or would have failed in it, but for a singular concurrence of good and evil fortune, which contributed much to the ultimate success of his enterprize. Great difficulties and fearful conflicts of fortune not only stimulate to great attempts, but absolutely create the opportunities for them.

Previously, however, to bringing Cortes on the scene,

the discovery of New Spain must be gradually traced back to its origin, and the connection must be shown which it had with various enterprizes that have already been commemorated.

It is one of the principal objects of this work to show the links which bind the various discoveries and conquests together, and thus to bring before the reader's mind, not a series of isolated transactions, however remarkable, but a connected history, in which it may be seen how great things grew out of little, and how the minor actors in this complicated tragedy (for the conquest of America cannot be looked at otherwise than as a great tragedy) contributed no little to the final dread result.

Going back, then, to the earliest times of discovery, let us trace the descent of the great mariners and conquerors who preceded in, and made broad, the way for Cortes. The well-known Ojeda was the companion of Columbus. Favoured by the powerful Bishop of Burgos, Ojeda became a discoverer on the *Tierra-firme*. Then followed the disastrous expeditions, before narrated, of Nicuesa and Ojeda. Ojeda dies in obscurity; Nicuesa perishes miserably; and Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, who had come out, concealed from his creditors in the hold of a vessel, takes the command, as it were, of Spanish discovery. Very renowned, and more important even than renowned, were his discoveries. He discovered the South Sea: he came upon a civilization, in the neighbourhood of Darien, which was superior to anything that had been seen in the islands: he heard, in a dim way, of Peru. It will be remembered what tempting hopes the young chief, Comogre's son, held out to Vasco Nuñez—probably in Pizarro's presence—with respect to a land which lay southwards. It will be remembered also what part in these proceedings the Bachiller Enciso took, in whose vessel Vasco Nuñez had come out; and how the Bachiller was forced to return to Spain.

The tidings of great discovery near Darien reached the mother-country, and all Spain was excited with the idea of fishing for gold. The Bachiller carried his potent enmity to court. Vasco Nuñez was superseded, and Pedrarias sent out with the most splendid and well-

162 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

equipped armament that had yet left Spain for the Indies. The miserable doings of Pedrarias, and the sad fate of Vasco Nuñez, have been duly recorded.

Now, among the hidalgos who had come out with Pedrarias, were several, who, perceiving that nothing was to be done at Darien, asked permission of the Governor to go to Cuba; and Pedrarias, not knowing what to do with his soldiers, consented. One of these men was Bernal Diaz del Castillo, a simple soldier, who has, however, written a narrative of considerable authority. This man tells us that he and his companions were received in a friendly manner by Velazquez, the Governor of Cuba, who promised to give them *encomiendas* of Indians, whenever there should be vacancies. As these vacancies, however, would only occur from the death of the proprietors, or the confiscation of their property (for the island of Cuba was already pacified, to use the phrase of that day), *encomiendas* of Indians fell vacant but slowly. The impatient conquerors, who had now been three years from home, and had met with nothing hardly but disease and disaster, resolved to form an expedition of discovery on their own account. Taking into their company some Spaniards in Cuba who also were without Indians, this little party of discoverers amounted to one hundred and ten persons. They found a rich man of Cuba willing to join them, named Francisco Hernandez de Córdoba, who was chosen as their captain, and no doubt helped to furnish out their expedition. With their united funds they bought three vessels. One of these vessels belonged to the Governor Velazquez, and he wished to be paid in slaves for his share of the venture, requiring as a condition that the expedition should go to some islands between Cuba and Honduras, make war, and bring back a number of slaves. The gallant company, however, refused to entertain this suggestion. They said that what Velazquez required was not just, and that neither God nor the King demanded of them that they should make free men slaves.¹ Velazquez admitted that they were right,

¹ "When the soldiers saw that what Diego Velazquez asked was not just, they answered him that neither God nor the King had commanded

and that their intention of discovering new lands was better than his. He aided them with the necessaries for the voyage, and they departed on the 8th of February 1517, having on board a celebrated pilot, named Anton Alaminos, who, as a boy, had been with Columbus, in one of his voyages.

When they had doubled Cape San Antonio, they took a westward course, navigating in a hap-hazard fashion, knowing nothing of the shoals, or the currents, or the prevailing winds. They could not, however, fail to make a great discovery, as any one may see who will look at the map, and observe how near to the continent the western extremity of the island of Cuba lies. Singularly enough, they found land at the nearest spot at which they could have found it, touching at the point of Cotoché.¹ This point was named from the words *con escotoch*, which mean "Come to my house," a friendly invitation which the voyagers heard very often at this part of the coast. They could not but at once remark that the natives of this new-found land were more civilized in dress and in the arts of life than the inhabitants of the islands. They saw also a great town, to which they gave the name of Grand Cairo; and buildings made of stone and mortar were for the first time discovered by the Spanish conquerors. From what remains there are to be seen of buildings, even to the present day, in the province of Yucatan, we may well conclude how great an impression must have been produced upon those Europeans who

us to turn a free people into slaves."—BERNAL DIAZ DEL CASTILLO, *Historia Verdadera de la Conquista de la Nueva-España*, cap. i. Madrid, 1632.

[As Mr. H. H. Bancroft says: "The honest soldier, however, finds difficulty in making the world believe his statement." Las Casas and Torquemada say plainly that to make slaves was the object of the expedition, and Gomara admits it. The reader will observe that the men to whom this virtuous indignation is attributed were fresh from serving with Pedrarias, a fact alone sufficient to hang them and any statement made in their favour. Probably there was a squabble about the prospective profits.]

¹ [Punta de Cotoché was made on 4th March 1517, but the Spaniards appear to have reached land—an island—a day or two before. They named the island *De las Mujeres*, from the number of female idols observed on it.]

164 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

were first permitted to see the signs of a civilization which has puzzled the learned ever since. The natives of Yucatan had apparently, however, made more advance in the arts of life than in the higher attributes of sincerity and good faith. They invited the Spaniards to their homes, laid an ambuscade for them, and wounded several. The Spaniards, in their turn, succeeded in capturing two Indians, who afterwards became interpreters.

The expedition of De Córdoba, having begun ill, continued to be unfortunate. The explorers went further westwards and discovered the Bay of Campeche, proceeding as far as Champoton; ¹ but they got into an encounter with the natives, lost a great many of their men, suffered from terrible thirst, and, after enduring many miseries, made their way back to Havana, and from thence ² to Santiago, where the Governor Velazquez then was. The news brought back by the expedition, and certain golden ornaments which they had to show (well-wrought, but not of pure gold), could not fail to stimulate Velazquez to further attempts at discovery. Indeed, the fame of De Córdoba's voyage spread far and wide, and various conjectures were instantly propounded as to who these islanders were, who built houses of stone and mortar; and some ingenious persons were ready to declare that these Indians must be the descendants of those Jews whom Titus and Vespasian had driven into exile. Velazquez lost no time in fitting out another armada, the command of which was given to a young countryman of his, who was treated by him as a relative, and whose name was Juan de Grijalva. ³ Pedro de Alvarado, a name afterwards too well known in American history, commanded one of the vessels in this expedition. Bernal Diaz was also employed, and Anton Alaminos went out as principal pilot.

Grijalva set sail from Cuba on the 5th of April 1518,

¹ [Or Potonchan. De Córdoba named the place Bahia de Mala Pelea. He died of his wounds shortly after he returned to Cuba.]

² In his way from Havana to Santiago on foot, BERNAL DIAZ mentions that he and his party came to the *pueblo* of Yaguarama, which belonged to the Clerigo Las Casas.—BERNAL DIAZ, *Conquista de la Nueva-España*, cap. 7. [See vol. i, p. 322.]

³ [His nephew, says Mr. Fiske (*Discovery of America*, ii, p. 243.)]

JUAN DE GRIJALVA'S VOYAGE 165

and, his vessels being driven by the currents in a more southerly direction than the former expedition, first saw land at the island of Cozumel, and afterwards resuming the direction which De Córdova's expedition had taken the year before, extended the field of discovery.¹

Summing up the result of what took place in the course of these expeditions, we may say that they were so far successful that they made the Spaniards acquainted with the existence of new lands on the continent of America, and with an Indian people of greater civilization than had hitherto been met with, who built houses instead of huts, and whose mode of dress was less primeval than the inhabitants of the islands. Such, with some gold, had been the result of the expeditions under Hernandez de Córdova and Juan de Grijalva, up to the time at which our narrative commences.

De Córdova had discovered Yucatan;² and Grijalva,

¹ [Grijalva sailed with four ships and some 250 men, and sighted Cozumel on 3rd May, where the Spaniards landed, and held divine service in a temple. They sailed down the coast as far as Ascension Bay, and then turning back rounded the peninsula to the opposite coast, following it round to San Juan de Ulua, and thence to Cabo Rojo, or perhaps Tampico. He returned in October or November.]

² De Solis and Pinzon had seen part of Yucatan in 1506, but had not landed. See NAV., *Col.*, iii, p. 47. See also HERRERA, dec. 1, lib. 6, cap. 17. The name of Yucatan has been attributed to a mistake which must often have happened. The Spaniards asked the name of the land; the Indians answered, "I do not understand," which passed afterwards for the name:—"The Indians not understanding what was asked of them answered in their tongue, saying *Yucatan*, *Yucatan*, that is to say, *I do not understand*, *I do not understand*; thus the Spanish discoverers thought that the Indians answered that it was called Yucatan, and in this way the country improperly kept the name of Yucatan."—NAVARRETE, SALVA, y SAINZ DE BARANDA, *Coleccion de Documentos Inéditos para la Historia de España*, tom. 1, p. 418. Madrid, 1844.

[Raleigh (*Hist. of the World*, Bk. i, cap. 8), tells the same story, but makes Yucatan mean "What do you say?" He attributes the name Peru to a similar mistake:—"Some of the Spaniards, utterly ignorant of that language, demanding by signs (as they could) the name of the country, and pointing with their hands athwart a river, or torrent, or brook, that ran by, the Indians answered *Peru*, which was either the name of that brook or of water in general." (See vol. i, p. 282.) With regard to Yucatan, Bernal Diaz gives the incident another form, placing it in Cuba, where two Indians, speaking to the Governor of the *Yucca* root, and *Tak*, its Cuban equivalent, some Spaniards exclaimed,

166 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

entering the river Tabasco, which falls into the Gulf of Mexico, discovered New Spain, a name that was first given to that country in the course of this voyage.

Grijalva went as far as the province of Panuco, but made no settlement in those parts, for which he was severely and unjustly blamed by Velazquez.

Previously to returning with the whole of his fleet, Grijalva sent home Pedro de Alvarado with the sick and wounded, and with the gold which had been obtained from the natives in the way of barter. The desire of Velazquez for discovery and settlement was likely to be increased by the accounts brought back by Alvarado; and, as Grijalva did not return so soon as was expected, Velazquez was anxious to gain tidings of what had become of him.¹ This Governor, accordingly, prepared, or perhaps we should say, authorized the preparation of, a larger fleet than he had hitherto sent out;² and, after some hesitation, conferred the command on Cortes.³ From the Governor's instructions, it appears that one of the first objects of the expedition was to have been the search after Grijalva,⁴ but that captain returned to Cuba before Cortes sailed.

It will here be desirable to give a brief account of the previous life of this Commander, as much may be inferred from it in reference to the important transactions which are now to be narrated.

"You see, sir, they call their country *Yucatan*." M. Waldeck derives it from *Amyouckatan*, "Listen to what they say."]

¹ [Grijalva was ruined for obeying his orders, which were to trade and discover, but not to settle, and hated and despised by his own men for his adherence to them. Discipline and honesty were out of place among the Conquistadores.]

² [A *Cédula* of 13th November 1518 made Velazquez Adelantado of what he had discovered and might discover; as a matter of fact, he had not discovered, and was not likely to discover, anything, but he hoped to reap the profit of other men's work. He made a bad mistake with Cortes.]

³ He had at first offered the command to a certain Baltasar Bermudez; but he was a free-spoken and independent person, and asked such conditions as Velazquez would not consent to, and broke off the negotiation with angry words.—LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxxv, p. 446.

⁴ See the instructions given by Velazquez to Cortes, *Documentos Inéditos*, tom. I, p. 385.

Hernando Cortes was born in the year 1485,¹ at Medellin, in Estremadura. His father was Martin Cortes, of Monroy: his mother Donna Catalina Pizarro Altamirano. Both father and mother were of good birth, but poor. The little Hernando was a sickly child, and many times during his childhood was at the point of death.

When he was fourteen years of age, his parents sent him to the University of Salamanca, where he remained two years, "studying grammar,"² and preparing himself for taking the degree of bachelor-at-laws.³

Weary of study, or, as appears probable, weary of the life of a poor student, Cortes returned, without leave, to his parents at Medellin. He neither found, nor made, a happy home for himself;⁴ and he determined to seek his fortune as a soldier. For adventurous young men, at that time, two careers were open: to serve under the generous and splendid Gonsalvo Hernandez de Córdova, called the "Great Captain"; or to seek for renown and riches in the New World.

At this juncture, Nicolas de Ovando was just going out to supersede Bobadilla, and Cortes resolved to accompany that distinguished personage, also a native of Estremadura. But, while Ovando's armament was preparing, Cortes went one night "to speak with a lady," as his chaplain judi-

¹ The day of his birth has been said to be the same as that of Luther; but this is a mistake. A Spanish writer builds upon the supposed coincidence a contrast between the merits of the two: the one "persecuting"; the other extending the "Catholic Faith."—"This great man was born the same day that that hellish beast the perfidious Luther came into the world. The one to persecute the Catholic Faith in the parts where it was established; our great Captain to temper the injury caused by this monster, and extend the faith of Christ our Lord, won by His precious blood, to the remote antipodes of the world."—PIZARRO, *Varones Ilustres del Nuevo Mundo*, p. 66.

² This meant "a course of study in Latin and Greek, as well as of rhetoric." See note in FOLSOM'S introduction to his translation of the despatches of Cortes, who refers to a "*Plan de los Estudios de la Universidad de Salamanca*." Madrid, 1772.

³ LAS CASAS, who is generally inimical to Cortes, speaks favourably of his education. He says that Cortes was a bachelor of laws, and "latino."

⁴ "He caused and received offence."—GOMARA, *Crónica de la Nueva-España*, cap. 1. BARCIA, *Historiadores*, tom. 2.

ciously expresses it, and as he was walking upon the wall of the back court-yard, it fell with him. The injuries which the young serenader then received, threw him into a fever, and before he recovered, the armament had sailed. He resolved, therefore, to adopt the other course—to go into Italy and take service under the Great Captain. With this view he went to Valencia, but in that city he fell ill again, and passed a year there of obscure hardship and poverty. Finally he returned to Medellin, with the firm intention of proceeding thence to the Indies. His parents gave him their blessing and some money; and, in his 19th year, A.D. 1504, he took his passage from San Lucar, in a merchant vessel, for St. Domingo. The voyage was a bad one, and the vessel on the point of being wrecked, a danger in which Cortes conducted himself with the bravery of one “who was to meet and conquer many greater hazards.”¹

A handsome, plausible, well-educated, well-born youth of his own province, who could tell him the local news at home, was sure to be well received by the Governor of Hispaniola. Accordingly, Cortes was employed, under Diego Velazquez, in pacifying certain provinces which were concerned in Anacaona's supposed, or intended, revolt, and when the war was ended Ovando gave the young man an *encomienda* of Indians, and a notarial office in the town of Azua, which had been lately founded.

It is an interesting circumstance in the life of Cortes, that he was nearly accompanying Diego de Nicuesa, and would have done so, but for an abscess in the right knee. Had Cortes joined the expedition of Nicuesa, it probably would not have been so unfortunate. He might have filled the place that Vasco Nuñez attained to, and his discoveries would then have naturally tended towards South America. But a still more arduous task was reserved for Cortes. His was not the nature to be satisfied with a tame provincial life, winning gold by the slow process of agriculture, or even by the swifter one of mining; and when the second Admiral, Don Diego Columbus, sent Diego Velazquez to subdue and colonize

¹ HERRERA, *Hist. de las Indias*, dec. I, lib. 6, cap. 13.

Cuba, Cortes accompanied him, and acted, it is said, as one of his secretaries.

After the island had been subdued, Cortes was one of those who received a grant of Indians ; but here again his unquiet intriguing nature did not suffer him to settle down at once into a painstaking colonist, or a sedulous official man.

The story of his early life now becomes very confused, as is naturally the case with that of any man who rises to great eminence, and who was connected with some ambiguous transactions. His partizans will try and ignore these affairs altogether,—his enemies will know far more about them than ever happened ; and the result is, that the future historian will have to take a middle course, or, which is wiser perhaps, to side now with one party, now with the other, in a most uncertain and dubious manner, relying upon small traits of circumstance and delicate indications of character.

There are two stories of a very different kind, to account for the indignation which Cortes brought upon himself at one time from the Governor, Diego Velazquez. According to one of these accounts, news arrived at Cuba that certain Judges of Appeal, who had been appointed in Spain, had arrived in Hispaniola. It was not often the fortune of governors in the Indies to be popular,—at least, with more than their own faction ; and Velazquez formed no exception to this rule. The difficulty for those who thought they were aggrieved by him, was how to carry their complaints to the Judges. Cortes, who, no doubt (if the story be true), had some private grudge against the Governor, agreed to be the bearer of these complaints, and undertook the bold task of passing from one island to the other in an open boat.¹ He was, however, sus-

¹ Benito Martinez, who presented a memorial to the King, on behalf of Velazquez, in the year 1519, confirms this part of the story.—“Also he says that because this captain Hernando Cortes with a caravel and certain companions made trouble another time when the island of Fernandina was first settled, Diego Velazquez took him, but at the petition of many loyal men, pardoned him ; now he has done this other fine thing in raising a revolt in the island, and to smooth over his evil conduct says everything bad of Diego Velazquez.”—*Documentos Inéditos*, tom. 1, p. 408.

pected, seized, and so completely found guilty in the Governor's estimation, that he wished to hang him. Certain persons, however, interceded for Cortes, and Diego Velazquez commuted the punishment into that of sending him as a prisoner to the island of Hispaniola. He was accordingly put on board a vessel bound for that island. Cortes, however, extricated himself from his fetters, swam or, as it is said, floated on a log, back again to the shores of Cuba, and took refuge in a church. There he remained some days. A crafty alguazil lay in wait for him, caught him one day as, intent upon paying his addresses to a lady, he was tempted to go beyond the sacred precincts,¹ and made a prisoner of him. It seemed now as if the fate of Cortes was determined; but many persons interceded for him, and Velazquez, who was a violent, but good-natured man, the first burst of his wrath having been spent, forgave Cortes, but would not, of course, receive such a person into his service any more.

There are several things very improbable in this story,² and Gomara removes some of the stigma of it, by saying that Cortes went to Cuba, as an officer of Pasamonte,³ the Treasurer, and was employed in the King's service, although the Chaplain admits that Velazquez also employed Cortes to manage business and to look after buildings.⁴

The other story is, that Cortes was required by Velaz-

¹ "An alguazil named Juan Escudero, who was hanged in New Spain by Cortes, caught him in a moment of carelessness one day, being intent on going out on his love affairs, by entering through the other door of the church and taking him by the arms from behind, and carried him off to prison."—HERRERA, *Hist. de las Indias*, dec. 1, lib. 9, cap. 9.

² It is improbable, for instance, that Velazquez should have wished to send Cortes to Hispaniola; and it is strange that the latter should have been so anxious to make his way back to Cuba.

³ "Fernando Cortes was at the conquest as an official of the Treasurer, Miguel de Pasamonte, to keep account of the Fifth and the King's revenue, and, further, Diego Velazquez himself asked for him, as being skillful and diligent."—GOMARA, *Crónica de la Nueva-España*, cap. 4. BARCIA, *Historiadores*, tom. 2.

⁴ "He had favour and authority with Diego Velazquez to despatch business and to take charge of buildings, as the Melting House and a hospital."—GOMARA, *Crónica de la Nueva-España*, cap. 4. BARCIA, *Historiadores*, tom. 2.

quez to marry a certain Donna Catalina Xuarez, one of a family of Spanish ladies who had come over in the suite of the Vice-Queen, Maria de Toledo,—the Governor himself being in love with one of her sisters. It is said that Cortes had given his word to marry Donna Catalina, and was unwilling to redeem it. However this may be, Cortes did marry her, and told Las Casas that he was as well pleased with her as if she had been the daughter of a duchess.¹ In this story, too, he is spoken of as having been arrested, as having escaped, and as having taken refuge in a sanctuary. According to this account, also, he is made out to have papers upon him which told against Velazquez.

Whichever may have been the true² story, or whatever the truth in each story, it is certain that, after a serious feud, the Governor and Cortes became friends, and, as a proof of this, it is mentioned that Velazquez stood as godfather to one of the children of Cortes. After his marriage Cortes employed himself in getting gold by means of his Indians:—"How many of whom died in extracting this gold for him God will have kept a better account than I have," says Las Casas.³

It must have been in the nature of Velazquez to forgive heartily, for we find that he not only did not molest

¹ "So they married at last, he as poor as his wife, and in those days of his poverty and humble estate I heard him say—and he said it to me—that he was as well satisfied with her as if she had been the daughter of a duchess."—LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxxv, p. 14.

² For my own part I am inclined to acquit Cortes of that treachery towards Velazquez which might be inferred from the first story. But I suspect that Catalina Xuarez had considerable cause of complaint against Cortes, whose enmity against the Governor was probably provoked by his siding with her relations.

[Mr. H. H. Bancroft (*Hist. of the Pacific States*, MEXICO, i, p. 47) combines the two accounts into one story, in which the difficulty with Catalina Suarez precedes, and is the cause of, the attempt to appeal to the judges in Española. He concludes that Cortes, finding the matter had become so serious, decided "that possibly he might best rid himself of the charming Catalina by marrying her." In 1522 she unexpectedly joined Cortes at Mexico, and in October died suddenly in the night. Subsequently her mother and brother accused Cortes of strangling her, and in 1529 a judicial inquiry was held. No decision was come to, and the affair was eventually dropped.]

³ LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxxv, p. 13.

Cortes any more, but that he conferred upon him the office of Alcalde in the town of Santiago, the capital of Cuba. Cortes, therefore, notwithstanding all his previous mishaps, was, in the year 1518, a rising and a prosperous man, and, being thirty-three years old, was at an admirable time of life for a career of vigorous adventure.

In conferring the command of the fleet on Cortes, Velazquez had been influenced by his secretary Andres de Duero, and by Amador de Lares,¹ the King's Contador in Cuba; but he disoblged several powerful persons in the island, relations of his own, who were not slow in suggesting that it was very imprudent to confide the expedition to Cortes. The old grudge between the Governor and Cortes was a good subject for these malcontents to dilate upon, and was, no doubt, made use of by all those who did not wish well to the newly-appointed Commander. The sentiments of these opponents to Cortes cannot be better illustrated than by some jests, which, perhaps, were all their own, but which were uttered in public by a buffoon in the household of Velazquez, named Cervantes. As this buffoon was one day accompanying Cortes and the Governor to the seaside, where they wished to observe how the vessels were getting on, and was a little ahead of the party, uttering his pleasantries, he turned to the Governor, and said, "Diego." "Well, fool, what do you want?" replied the Governor; "Look what you are about! we shall have to go and hunt after Cortes."² Upon this, Cortes is said to have made some angry answer, which I do not believe in, as it does not show his usual skilfulness and self-command. But it is more probable that Andres de Duero replied for him, saying, "Be quiet, you drunken idiot! do not play the rascal any more; we know well that these malicious things which pretend to be jests, do not come from you."³ But the buffoon, not by any means dismayed,

¹ Amador de Lares had been a long time in Italy, and Las Casas was wont to warn the Governor to "beware of twenty-two years of Italy."
—*Hist. de las Indias*, lxxv, p. 447.

² LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxxv, p. 450.

³ BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 19.

went on saying all the way, "Viva, viva! to the health of my friend Diego, and of his lucky Captain, Cortes! and I swear, my friend, that I shall go with Cortes myself to these rich lands, that I may not see you crying, my friend Diego, at the bad bargain you have just made."

It would be difficult to say what impression these sayings, and many like them, uttered in jest and in earnest, produced upon the uncertain mind of the Governor. One thing, however, he should have recollected, that if half trust is unwise in dealing with a friend, anything less than unbounded confidence is too little trust in dealing with a reconciled enemy—especially one who has been injuriously treated.

With regard to the Governor's power to remove Cortes, which some have denied, I have no doubt that it was amply sufficient for the purpose, up to the moment of starting. It is a difficult question, which there are not facts fully to decide, what part Cortes contributed to the expenses of the expedition. His partizans assert that it was two-thirds of the whole; but their own statement will hardly bear out that.¹ Cortes, like Cæsar, whom we shall find he singularly resembles, was fond of expense, and was probably an indebted man. There is no doubt that whatever Cortes did advance was chiefly borrowed² capital, and borrowed on the security which his appointment by Velazquez afforded, for it is

¹ "It was said in the town that Cortes had expended more than 5000 castellanos, and that Diego Velazquez had lent him 2000 more of certain gold brought in for melting; and it was also said that Diego Velazquez had added 1800 castellanos in merchandise for trade, wines, and other things, and three ships, of which one was a brigantine. And also that the said Cortes, besides the 5000 castellanos, provided seven ships, and goods belonging to himself and his friends."—*Documentos Inéditos*, i, p. 487.

[The castellano at this time was equal to 450 maravedis (*Col. de Doc. Inéd.* . . . *de Indias*, xiv, p. 18). In a letter written by the magistrates of Vera Cruz to Charles V., they say that Cortes provided two-thirds of the cost (*Ibid.* p. 37). See also vol. i, p. 357, note 2.]

² "When, therefore, certain merchants, his friends, called Jaime Triá, and a certain Pedro de Xeres, saw him appointed captain, and prospering, they lent him 4000 gold pesos and other merchandize on the security of his *encomienda*."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 20.

174 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

quite ridiculous to assert that he had any independent powers from the Jeronimite Fathers, who were ruling at Hispaniola.

I must remark here upon the deplorable manner in which all these expeditions were managed, the Governor descending to the condition of a merchant-adventurer, and being concerned in the profits of each enterprize. The lamentable result of this state of things has been seen in the proceedings at Darien; and it was a practice unfortunately sanctioned and partaken in by the Spanish Monarchs themselves.

The complicated form of government, also, in the Spanish Indies had the worst results. Diego Velazquez was a Viceroy of a Viceroy; and the person from whom he held authority, Don Diego Columbus, had been, to a certain extent, superseded by other authorities. A surer mode of creating factions could not have been devised. Authority, like land, cannot be held by too simple a tenure, and intermediate interests are fatal to the improvement of the country to be ruled, as of the soil to be tilled.

It was on the 15th of November 1518, that Grijalva returned to Santiago, bringing with him many tempting signs of the riches of the country he had begun to discover. It is by no means improbable that his arrival produced some considerable change¹ in the mind of Velazquez, which would be observed, and rendered more and more unfavourable to Cortes, by those who had already reminded the Governor that the newly-appointed captain was "an Estremaduran,² full of high, crafty, and ambitious thoughts."³

¹ Such is GOMARA's account ("Juan de Grijalva returned to Cuba at this time, and with his coming there was a change in Diego Velazquez."—GOMARA, *Crónica de la Nueva-España*, cap. 7. BARCIA, *Historiadores*, tom. 2), and this is one of the instances in which there does not appear any motive that Cortes could have for deceiving his chaplain.

² The reader will observe again the influence which a man's place of birth had upon his fortunes in Spain.

³ "That he was an Estremaduran, crafty, arrogant, and ambitious, and a man who would avenge himself for the past."—GOMARA, *Crónica de la Nueva-España*, cap. 7. BARCIA, *Historiadores*, tom. 2,

It is important to enter into these details with respect to the departure of Cortes, as so much of his future conduct depended upon the position he was to take up now in reference to his employer, Velazquez. In truth, the fate of a great empire hung upon the whisperings of certain obscure and interested persons, on the hired jests of a buffoon, and on the petty provincial jealousy which was apt to make an Estremaduran hateful to a Biscayan or to an Andalusian.

Much may be said upon the singular injustice, not to speak of the folly, of depriving Cortes of such a command, after having once confided it to him. His means, his credit, everything that he possessed, were pledged. He had even altered his style of dress, and wore for the first time a plume of feathers,¹ that well became his very handsome countenance, which, however, needed no such adornment to make it distinguished as that of one who was fit to rule his fellow-men. The wisdom of this change of dress may well be questioned. It added, no doubt, to the envious sayings uttered against him; and Cortes should, by this time, have known men well enough to be aware, that it is in little things of this kind that you can the least venture to offend them.

It is probable that the Governor began to think of conferring the command of the expedition upon some other person, and that intelligence of this change of disposition being conveyed to Cortes did not render him less alert in his endeavours to get his fleet equipped, and to make a start. To suppose, however, that he really did slip away by night, and that, on the Governor being apprized of it, he hastened to the shore, and that a dramatic conversation took place, in which Cortes said that "these things, and things like them, should be done before they are thought of,"² seems to my mind

¹ "And from now he commenced to adorn and embellish his outward person much more than before. He wore a plume of feathers with a medal of gold (in his cap) which suited him very well."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 20.

² "And being stopped there (on the shore) Diego Velazquez said to him, 'How Gossip! Is it thus you go? A courteous way of leaving me!'" Cortes answered, 'Pardon me, Sir, these things and things like

176 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

entirely improbable. In fact, such a story is nearly certain to be the mythical form in which the transaction would come to be related, the fact merely being, that Cortes made immense and perhaps secret haste to get the ships ready, and to take leave of the Governor.

There is a story, which doubtless is true, as Las Casas had it from the mouth of Cortes himself, that he laid hold of all the cattle which a certain butcher had in his possession, who was bound under penalty to supply the town of Santiago, and that Cortes paid for what he seized by a gold chain, which he took off his own neck and gave to the butcher.¹

All this haste,² which was afterwards, no doubt, made known to Velazquez, would naturally give him an additional reason for wishing to supersede Cortes, as showing that

them should be done before they are thought of. Has your Excellency any commands for me?"—LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxx, p. 452.

¹ "Although not inclined to, because if he gave them it was at the risk of his life, which was the penalty for not supplying meat to the town. Cortes immediately took off a gold chain from round his neck and gave it to the contractor; this Cortes himself told me."—LAS CASAS, *Hist. de las Indias*, lxx, p. 452.

[Cortes also relates the story himself in his memorial to the Emperor in 1542.]

² Mr. PRESCOTT is persuaded that the story of the clandestine departure of Cortes is true; but this painstaking and truth-loving historian is, I think, in this instance misled by LAS CASAS, who, though truthful, was credulous, and in this case was not an eye-witness, and was not, as Mr. Prescott supposes, residing at that time on the island. The story of the purchase of the provisions may be quite correct, and this I believe to be all that Las Casas could quote Cortes for, when he says immediately afterwards, "this Cortes himself told me."

The truth probably is that Cortes sailed suddenly, but not clandestinely.

The remarks of De Solis on this point seem to me very much to the purpose.—"Nor, if we should believe a man of his intelligence and sagacity guilty of this indiscretion, does it seem likely that in so small a place as the town of Santiago was at that time three hundred men could be called from their quarters and embarked at night, and among them Diego de Ordáz and other adherents of the Governor, without, among so many, one informing him of what was occurring; or that among those who watched him the noise of such a commotion should not have awoken any. Wonderful silence in the one and strange negligence in the others!"—DE SOLIS, *Hist. de la Conquista de la Nueva-España*, lib. 1, cap. 10.

Cortes had divined what had been the Governor's thoughts. The astute Estremaduran, far from avoiding Velazquez at this critical period, took care to be constantly with him, and to be always showing him the greatest attention and respect.¹ I should, therefore, prefer giving credence to the simple account of Bernal Diaz, who was present, and who says, "Andres de Duero kept advising Cortes that he should hasten to embark, for that the Velazquez party (*los Velazquez*) kept the Governor in a state of excessive changefulness by the importunities of those who were his relations; and after Cortes perceived this, he ordered his wife, Donna Catalina, to see that all the provisions and the dainties, which wives are accustomed to make for their husbands, especially for such an expedition, were immediately embarked on board the ships. And then he gave orders, by sound of trumpet, that all the masters, and pilots, and soldiers should be ready, and that on such a day and night none of them should remain on shore. And, after he had given that command, and had seen them all embarked, he went to take leave of Diego Velazquez, accompanied by his great friends and companions, Andres de Duero and the Contador Amador de Lares, and all the principal inhabitants of the city: and, after many parting salutations from Cortes to the Governor and from the Governor to Cortes, he took leave of him: and the next day, very early in the morning, after having heard mass, we went to the ships, and the same Diego Velazquez turned to accompany Cortes, and many other hidalgos, until we were about to sail, and with a prosperous voyage in a few days we arrived at the town of Trinidad."²

It was on the 18th of November 1518, that Cortes and his companions set sail from Santiago.

His banner displayed a coloured cross on a black ground, with white and blue flames scattered about it,

¹ "They . . . in every way strove to lower him in the eyes of the Governor . . . Cortes, who was fully acquainted with this, took care to be always at the Governor's side, and lost no opportunity of shewing his attachment to him."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 20.

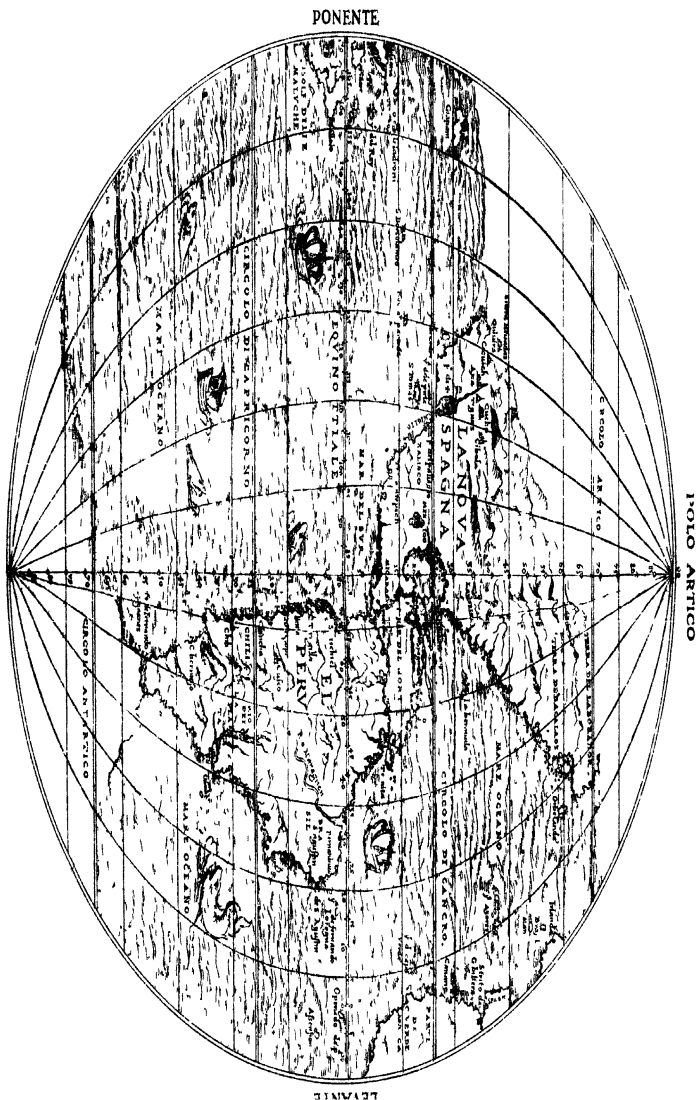
² BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 20.

178 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

and round the border were the words in Latin, "Let us follow the Cross, and in that sign we shall conquer."¹

¹ "His standard was of black silk with a red cross, with flames of blue and white sewn round it ; and round the border an inscription, 'Let us follow the Cross, and in that sign we shall conquer.'"—HERRERA, *Hist. de las Indias*, dec. 2, lib. 4, cap. 6.

[According to other authorities . . . "and, if we have faith, under that sign we shall conquer." There is a standard of the Cross preserved in the Artillery Museum at Madrid, said to be this, or another used by Cortes, but it is of red silk.]



CHAPTER II

CORTES REFUSES TO BE SUPERSEDED—SAILS FOR COZUMEL—
THENCE TO TABASCO—HIS FIRST VICTORY IN NEW SPAIN
—SAILS ON TO ST. JUAN DE ULUA—IS CHOSEN GENERAL
—ENTERS CEMPOALA—FOUND VILLA RICA DE LA VERA
CRUZ—SENDS MESSENGERS TO THE SPANISH COAST—
DESTROYS THE FLEET

CORTES proceeded on his way, and was fortunate enough to obtain by promises of payment, with force visible in the background, supplies of provisions, both from the king's stores at Macaca, and from a laden vessel which he met with. In fact, as he said afterwards, he played the part of a "gentleman corsair." After he had arrived at Trinidad, formal orders came from Velazquez to Verdugo, the Alcalde Mayor of that town, to deprive Cortes of the command.¹ But this was now too late. Cortes, as De Solis remarks, knew how to gain men's hearts, and how "to be a superior without ceasing to be a companion." Indeed, he gained over the very messengers whom Velazquez sent: and such was the disposition of the fleet towards its Commander, that it would have been impossible for Verdugo to supersede Cortes. He did not attempt it. In truth, this was a most unreasonable proceeding on the part of Velazquez; and though it may be said that Cortes would have shown a higher nobility of mind if he had obeyed the orders of his superior, yet it could hardly be expected that an ambitious young man, who had spent his all, and become indebted, in order to engage in this expedition, should

¹ [Said to be due to the warnings of an astrologer. The command was to be transferred to Vasco Porcallo, who had been in the Governor's thoughts for the post before Cortes, at the time when it was offered to Baltasar Bermudez.]

180 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

suffer himself to be deprived of his command in this capricious manner. He wrote a letter of remonstrance and reassurance to Velazquez, and then sailed on to Havana.¹ A similar missive to the former one from Velazquez reached the Alcalde there; but it had no effect. The Alcalde did not dare to arrest Cortes, who wrote another letter to Velazquez in the same strain as before, and then set sail, on the next day, the 10th of February 1519, for the island of Cozumel.

This series of transactions was very important. Cortes had now settled the course of his career. He could not return, like Hernandez de Córdova or Grijalva: there was nothing now left for him but ruin, or such ample success as should efface all previous disobedience and misconduct.

The armament consisted of five hundred and fifty Spaniards, two or three hundred Indians, some few negroes, and twelve or fifteen horses, and, for artillery, ten brass guns and some falconets. Bernal Diaz rightly gives a list and an account of the horses.² In truth, it would be difficult to estimate the number of men that one horse might be equivalent to.

Upon the landing of Cortes at Cozumel the inhabitants fled; but, Cortes capturing some of them and treating

¹ [The Havana (San Christobal) was then on the south side of the island and therefore in his course.]

² "The Captain Cortes, a dark chestnut horse, which died immediately on arriving at San Juan de Ulua.

"Pedro de Alvarado and Hernando Lopes de Avila, a very good chestnut mare for draught or for riding: and, after we came to New Spain, Pedro de Alvarado bought the half of the mare from Lopes de Avila, or took it from him by force.

"Alonso Hernandez Puertocarrero, a grey mare, a good charger, which Cortes bought from him with some gold cord."

And so there follows a list of thirteen people, each of whom had one of these valuable possessions, and the last man mentioned, Juan Sedefio, was considered the richest man in the armament, for he possessed a ship, a mare, a negro, some cazabi-bread and bacon, and as Diaz remarks, at that time neither horses nor negroes were to be had except at great expense, which shows that the importation of negroes was not much facilitated by De Bresa's licence.

[In a claim for reward made after the conquest, Diego Ordaz mentions having given 450 pesos of gold for a mare killed in the siege, and 300 for a horse. Mr. Prescott values the gold peso at £2, 12s. 6d.]

them kindly, they returned and proved submissive and obliging hosts to the Spaniards.¹

It was at Cozumel that Cortes, "who put great diligence into everything he did," called Bernal Diaz and a Biscayan named Martin Ramos, and asked them what they thought was meant by the words, "Castillan, Castillan," which he was told the Indians of Cotoché had addressed to them when they were in the expedition of Hernandez de Córdova; and Cortes added that he had thought about this many times,² and that by chance there might be Spaniards in those lands. Accordingly, inquiries were made; it was ascertained that there were Spaniards somewhere in that country, and Cortes caused search to be made for them. It was not successful then, and the fleet sailed away; but on its return to Cozumel (which occurred in consequence of the leakage of one of the vessels), one of the Spaniards sought for made his appearance.

His name was Geronimo de Aguilar, a native of Ecija, and he related how he had been one of the crew under Valdivia, who it may be remembered, was sent home by the inhabitants of Darien in 1511, to represent their case to the court of Spain. They had been wrecked, at the Viveras, near Jamaica. Taking to their boat, they were thrown on the coast of the province of Maya, and fell into the power of a cacique of those parts. Valdivia and some of his men were killed and devoured; this man, Geronimo de Aguilar, escaped with another Spaniard, and came into the hands of a cacique who ultimately treated them well.³ This other Spaniard, who had also received the message of Cortes, was not inclined to leave his wife and children, and moreover he was ashamed to show himself with his nostrils and his ears bored after the manner of the people

¹ [At Cozumel Cortes mustered his men, divided them into eleven companies, and addressed a speech to his followers, dwelling on the religious and material benefits the Indians were to provide for body and soul. Apparently Sir Arthur Helps did not believe in the verity of this speech as he makes no reference to it.]

² Cortes does not seem to have communicated that it was part of his instructions to look for these men.

³ [See vol. i, p. 243. According to Aguilar's own version he owed his escape to his chastity and other virtues. His story suggests the "Lives of the Saints." He was in minor orders.]

182 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

with whom he lived. Geronimo de Aguilar served afterwards as interpreter to Cortes, and an interpreter was so useful that it was looked upon as a miraculous interposition that the fleet had been obliged to return to Cozumel, and had thus secured, at the outset of their undertaking, the services of so valuable a comrade.

It is worthy of notice that the inhabitants of Cozumel were found to worship an idol in the shape of a cross.¹ This statement is amply confirmed by the discoveries recently made in Central America.²

Leaving Cozumel, and passing round the coast of Yucatan, Cortes made his entry at the river of Grijalva into New Spain. After some resistance from the natives, he disembarked, and took possession of the country in the name of the Spanish Monarch. Proceeding inland, he found that he was in a territory called Tabasco; and there occurred his first great battle with the natives.³ They behaved with the most conspicuous courage. Bernal Diaz says: "I recollect that, when we let off the guns, the Indians uttered loud cries, and whistling sounds, and threw earth and straw into the air, that we should not see the damage which we were doing to them; and then they sounded their trumpets, and uttered their cries, and said, 'Ala Tala.'" It appears that the Tabascans had some notion of an ambuscade; but all their military skill and prowess were of little avail against the horses and the cannon of the Spaniards. Many of the Spaniards were wounded in this encounter, and two of them died of their wounds. Gomara speaks of Saint James having appeared in the battle on a white

¹ "In the midst of which was a cross of limestone ten palms [the Castilian palm was 8½ inches] in height, which they worshipped as the god of rain."—GOMARA, *Crónica*, cap. 15.

"Cozumel was the chief sanctuary of the Indians inhabiting Yucatan, and to that place they came in pilgrimage from all parts by high roads that traversed it everywhere, of which roads vestiges remain to-day in many places."—DIEGO LOPEZ COGOLLUDO, *Historia de Yucatan*, lib. I, cap. 6. Campeche, 1842.

² See STEPHENS'S *Central America*, ii, p. 345, where there is an engraving of a tablet at Palenque, in which two priests are making offerings to a highly ornamented cross.

³ On 25th March 1519.

horse, but Bernal Diaz, while admitting that such might have been the case, says that "he, sinner as he was, was not worthy to be permitted to see it."

This battle was called the battle of Cintla; and to commemorate their success, the Spaniards changed the name of the chief town of the Tabascans from Potonchan¹ to that of Santa Maria de la Vitoria.

The victory was of the utmost service to Cortes.² It made the Tabascans submissive to him; and with other presents which they brought to the conqueror were twenty female slaves, whose business it was to make bread, and who carried with them the stones between which, after the Oriental fashion, they were accustomed to pound their maize. Amongst these Indian women was a person of great intelligence, who was destined to play a considerable part in the conquest of Mexico. The story of her life was a singular one. Though found in the condition of a slave, she was of high birth, being the daughter of a cacique who ruled over Painala, as his principal *pueblo*, and possessed other dependent *pueblos*. Painala was in the Mexican province of Coatzacoalco: she was accordingly able to speak Mexican. Her father died when she was but a girl, and her mother married another cacique, a young man. They had a son born to them, and wishing to secure the heritage for him, and to despoil her, they gave her by night to some Indians of Xicalango, pretending to their own people that she had died. From these masters she passed, probably by sale, to the Tabascans, by whom, as we have seen, she was presented to Cortes. She was baptized as Marina, and afterwards served faithfully as an interpreter. Indeed, her fidelity was assured by the love which she bore to her master.³

¹ [Following Gomara and Peter Martyr, but according to others it was not Potonchan, the scene of Cordova's reverse.]

² [Las Casas, who did not like this method of conversion by shot and sword, numbers the slaughtered Indians by thousands, and remarks, "This was the first preaching of the gospel in New Spain by Cortes."]

³ [Marina had at first been the property of de Puertocarrero. She bore Cortes several children, and in 1524 he married her to Captain Juan Jaranillo, who—Gomara says—was made drunk for the purpose, but Bernal Diaz denies the story.]

184 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

Cortes, who from the first showed himself intent upon conversion, placed a cross in the great temple of Potonchan; and, before his departure, celebrated, with what pomp he could, the feast of Palm Sunday, Padre Fray Bartolomé de Olmedo and the Licentiate Juan Diaz having endeavoured to instruct the Tabascans in the rudiments of Christianity. Gomara says that the Tabascans broke their idols and received the cross; but the account which a much later historian gives is the more probable one,—namely, that their docility was more inclined to receive another God than to renounce any one of their own.¹

Immediately after his celebration of the feast of Palm Sunday, Cortes returned to his ships, and, continuing his voyage, arrived at San Juan de Ulua on Holy Thursday of the year 1519. A little incident occurred in the course of this voyage, very characteristic of the men and of the time. As they coasted along, keeping close to the shore, the former companions of De Córdoba and Grijalva kept pointing out to Cortes those parts of the coast with which they were familiar, naming this river, and that town, this mountain, and that headland. Remarking the conversation, a certain cavalier named Alonso Hernando de Puertocarrero, approached Cortes, and said, "It seems to me, Señor, that these gentlemen, who have been twice to this land, have been saying to you,

‘ Behold France, Montesinos,
Behold Paris, the city,
Behold the waters of Douro,
Where they fall into the sea.’²

LOCKHART’S Translation.

I say to you, observe these rich lands, and know well what to do." To which Cortes replied, "Let God give us good fortune in battle, as he gave the Paladin Roldan; for the rest, having such men as yourself and

¹ "But there was found in them only a pliancy which rendered them more inclined to receive other gods than to part with any of their own."—DE SOLIS, *Conquista de la Nueva-España*, lib. 1, cap. 20.

² *Romances Caballerescos*, No. 29. G. B. DEPPING, *Romancero Castellano*.

other cavaliers for captains, I shall know well what to do."¹

It is possible that Puertocarrero did not make the allusion without a little touch of satire, but the words may also have conveyed a serious meaning, and appear to have been so construed by Cortes. It is one of the chief merits of a popular literature, whatever its kind, that it affords the means of so much being conveyed, when so little is said. Montesinos, in the Spanish romance alluded to, is the grandson of Charlemagne. His parents are banished from court, upon the suggestion of a false enemy named Tomillos. Montesinos is brought in a hermit's cell; and, when the youth becomes complete in the knowledge of arms, his father takes him up to a lofty eminence, and there, without any affront to the geography of romances in the middle ages, points out to him, in the stanza quoted above, Paris and the Douro, the palace of the King, and the castle of his enemy, Tomillos. The youth goes to court, enters the hall of Charlemagne's palace, observes Tomillos cheating the King at a game of chess, points out the fraud, and eventually strikes the false player dead. He then discovers his own lineage, and is the means of restoring his parents to their former rank. There is a peculiar felicity in the date of the day on which the father of Montesinos shows Paris to his son,² which was the day of St. Juan, after whom, as well as in honour of Juan Grijalva, St. Juan de Ulua had been named.

It is a fancy of mine that Cortes unconsciously betrayed a little of his own character, in naming the Paladin Roldan as his hero. The crafty and valorous exploits of that knight are well described in a romance, which makes him have no scruple in allowing his beloved Donna Anna to suppose that he is slain, in order that he might have his revenge upon the Knights of the Round Table; and where,

¹ BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 36.

² "The twenty-fourth of June
Was the day of St. John."

—*Romances Caballerescos*, No. 28. DEPPING, *Romancero Castellano*.

186 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

disguised as a Moor, he takes the command of an army of Moors,¹ in order to betray them.

At San Juan de Ulua, Cortes met with a friendly reception from the natives; and shortly after his arrival, there came some Indians, sent by two high officers of a certain great King, named Montezuma, to inquire why he had made his appearance on that coast.² The Spanish Commander replied, that he had come to treat with their Prince upon matters of great importance, and he asked to see these officers. They accordingly advanced to meet him,—listened to his story, that the cause of his coming was to treat with their master on the part of Don Charles of Austria, Monarch of the East,—and they made him rich presents; but they entirely put aside any hope of his being allowed to see their Sovereign. Cortes replied, that kings always received ambassadors, and that he was resolved not to quit the country without seeing Montezuma. At this declaration, they were so alarmed, that they offered to send to their Monarch for an answer; and, as these officers of Montezuma were accompanied by skilful painters, who depicted with accuracy all that they saw amongst the Spaniards, they were able to convey a full representation of what had occurred to their Monarch.

The alert mind of Cortes, anxious to adopt every opportunity for impressing the Mexicans (that was the

¹ See the romance beginning—

“ Dia era de san Jorge,
Dia de gran festividad.
Aquel dia por mas honor
Los doce se van á armar.”

—*Romances Caballerescos*, No. 12. DEPPING, *Romancero Castellano*.

² [Montezuma had previously received news of the Spaniards. An Aztec tribute collector happened to be in the neighbourhood of Tabasco when Juan de Grijalva was on the coast in 1518, and immediately hurried back to Mexico with drawings, and hieroglyphic descriptions of the wonders that he had seen. The Aztecs may possibly have heard vaguely of the Spaniards during the twenty-five years the latter had devastated the Indies, but the actual appearance of the white strangers was fraught with more meaning to the Mexicans than if they had been merely invaders with whom the natives would have known how to deal. For the reason of this see *post*, p. 187, note 3.]

name of the people over whom Montezuma ruled) with a sense of his power, prepared a review for the officers of the King, and an additional subject for the artists.¹ He ordered the cannon to be heavily charged, and all his horsemen, under the command of Pedro de Alvarado, to prepare for exercise. The horses were to have on their poitrals, with bells attached to them. "If we could have a charge upon the sand-hills," he said, "it would be good; but they will see that we sink into the mire. Let us repair to the shore when the tide is going out, and make a charge there, going two abreast." This cavalry movement was accordingly executed in presence of Montezuma's officers. Then came the principal show of the day. The cannon were discharged, and the stone-balls went re-echoing over the hills² with a great noise, which was the better heard, as it happened to be a calm day. All these things were represented by the Mexican painters as best they could; and never, perhaps, in the history of the world, was there brought to a monarch such a picture of the destruction that impended over his kingdom. The awful writing in the hall of Belshazzar was not more significant than this picture would have been to Montezuma, could he rightly have appreciated all that it depicted.³

¹ [Montezuma was not King in the European feudal sense to which the Spaniards were accustomed, a dignity unknown to the Aztecs. He was the war chief, and also exercised priestly functions (see FISKE, *Discovery of America*, i, p. 111, *et seq.*).]

² This is an instance of a considerable difficulty which occurs from a double meaning of a Spanish word. "El Monte" means a "wood," and also a "mountain," or "hill"; and frequently it requires the minutest knowledge of geography to know how the word should be rendered. In the present instance the passage is *iban las piedras por los montes retumbando con gran ruido*.—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 38. From the nature of the coast, I have adopted the rendering in the text, though not without some doubts as to its propriety.

³ [He probably did appreciate it. The "long arm of coincidence" never acted more unerringly in fiction than it did here in fact when it brought Cortes and his Spaniards to the coast of Mexico at the psychological moment when politically and religiously the Aztec empire or confederacy was ripe for their attack. As in every other point relating to the history of ancient America historians, ethnologists, and mythologists have disputed in many volumes about the origin and early history of the tribes occupying the central plateau of Mexico; but we may take it that the Aztec military supremacy only dated from

188 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

After an entertainment which Cortes gave to these officers of Montezuma, he had another conversation with them, through his interpreters, Geronimo de Aguilar and Donna Marina, in the course of which he asked if the Mexican King had any gold, and being answered in the affirmative, he said, "Let him send it me, for I and my companions have a complaint, a disease of the heart, which is cured by gold."

An answer came back from Montezuma in seven days, and was brought by Teotlili, one of the officers who had

the fifteenth century, when Tenochtitlan, or Mexico, confederated with Tezcuco and Tlacopan, and their united forces gradually extended authority over the neighbouring tribes, but almost entirely in the direction of the Gulf coast. But this supremacy did not lead to the formation of an organized state, nor was it unquestioned; certain tribes, as the Cholulans and Tlascalans, retained their independence, fought the Aztecs on equal terms, and gave invaluable aid to the Spaniards. The object of Aztec warfare was tribute, whether food-stuffs and other necessities or human beings for sacrificial purposes, and it may be imagined how eagerly the peoples so ceaselessly scourged would hail the advent of the heaven-sent strangers as a means of ridding themselves of the Aztec tyranny and avenging themselves for the past. Therefore there was not only no patriotism, no unity of feeling, among the natives, but, on the contrary, a hatred of the Aztec yoke which rendered every tributary state an open or secret enemy; while, on the other hand, the supremacy of the conquerors had not lasted long enough, nor had it been enforced with such uniform success, as to reduce these tributary states to a condition of military impotence.

On the religious side the moment was equally happy. The Mexican belief about the fair-skinned god Quetzalcoatl (see vol. i, p. 203), whether solar myth, deified hero, or what else, was that in due time he would return and resume his rule over the Aztec people. For some years previous to 1519 there had been a combination of prophecies, portents, and mysterious natural phenomena which had unsettled men's minds and seemed to show that the expected moment was at hand, so that when Grijalva appeared on the coast in 1518 the news was at once sent up to Mexico that the god had returned. Grijalva went, but Cortes came, and the fear was renewed in the mind of Montezuma; while, whether for them fear or hope, it affected the resolution of the Mexican people. Thus, says Mr. Fiske, "the existence of this general belief was certainly a capital fact, and probably the supreme fact, in the political and military situation. It effectually paralyzed the opposition to their entrance into the country." It also probably accounts for Montezuma's unnatural, or despairing, submissiveness later. Mr. H. H. Bancroft remarks that had Cortes known who he was supposed to be, and acted the part, he might have marched to Mexico without unsheathing a sword. See also *post*, p. 252.]

before met Cortes. He brought with him magnificent presents¹ from the King, and, amongst other things, a sun of gold, which he laid before Cortes, informing him that Montezuma sent these things to show how he estimated the friendship of that king (Charles the Fifth), but in the present state of affairs, it was "not convenient" to allow Cortes to present himself at the Mexican court. Certainly, from the official style of this reply, we may conjecture that the Mexicans had reached a high state of what is called civilization.

Cortes received the presents with all due deference; but said it that would be impossible for him to desist from his undertaking. The honour of his King forbade it. This he said so angrily, that the officers of Montezuma offered to send again to their Sovereign for instructions, and they did so. Meanwhile, Cortes despatched Francisco de Montejo, accompanied by the celebrated pilot Anton Alaminos, to seek a port that might be a better station for them than the present one, which was a barren and desert place vexed by mosquitoes. They returned with the intelligence that they had found a port twelve leagues off, close to a fortress named Chiahuitzla.

Montezuma resolved not to receive these strangers; and a more peremptory answer than the last, but accompanied, like it, with presents, was conveyed by Teotlili to Cortes. It happened to be evening time, when the Spanish Commander was about to reply to this second message, and the Ave Maria bell was heard from that vessel in the squadron which served as a church. The Spaniards fell on their knees to pray; Teotlili inquired from Marina what this meant, and Cortes thought it a good occasion to commence the work of conversion, which, to do him justice, was always

¹ [Dishes of gold and silver as big as carriage wheels, gold in dust and nuggets, animals fashioned in gold, and precious stones. Las Casas says that "the value of the gold and silver brought there was 20,000 or 25,000 castellanos, but from the beauty of the workmanship worth much more." And with this was a request that the Spaniards would go home! Torquemada says that this gift cost Montezuma his throne and life. See also *ante*, p. 52.]

in his mind. For this purpose he brought forward Father Bartolomé de Olmedo, who endeavoured to give Teotlili some insight into the mysteries of the Catholic Faith, and into the nature of his own idolatry. Then Cortes continued the discourse, intimating that conversion was one of the chief objects of his Sovereign; and that, having come so far on such a great affair from so mighty a King, he must persevere in his attempt. The Mexican ambassador, in much anger and confusion, broke off the conference.

The next morning there were no Indians to assist the Spaniards and to bring them food. The friends of the Governor Velazquez murmured against Cortes, and Diego de Ordaz told him that the army was averse to proceeding, and that the means at his disposal were not sufficient for the conquest of such an empire as Montezuma's. Cortes replied by dwelling on the success which had hitherto attended the expedition; but admitted, that if the soldiers were so disheartened as Ordaz asserted, it would be madness to attempt such an enterprise, and that they must consider about their return to Cuba. He, accordingly, published an order for the return of the fleet to that island.

It must not be supposed that Cortes took this important step without having thoroughly prepared for it, by sounding his chief partizans as to the course they were inclined to take, and, probably, conveying to them his own wishes. The way in which the camp was split into two factions, and the underhand negotiations that went on, cannot be better seen and appreciated than by the short account which Bernal Diaz gives of what happened to himself. "One night, a little after midnight, came to my hut Alonso Hernandez Puertocarrero, Juan de Escalante, and Francisco de Lugo (Lugo and I were, in some sort, relations, and from the same country), and they said to me: 'Señor Bernal Diaz del Castillo, come hither with your arms to go the rounds, for we will accompany Cortes, who is making the rounds.' And when I was at some little distance from the hut, they said to me: 'Look, Señor; keep secret for a little time that which we are going to tell you, for it is of much importance, and your

companions in the hut may not hear it, who are of the faction of Diego Velazquez.' And what they said to me was the following. 'Does it seem good to you, Señor, that Hernando Cortes should have brought us all here under a delusion, and given out proclamations in Cuba that he was coming to make a settlement, and now we have learnt that he has no authority for that, but only for trading; and they wish (the change of person may here be noted) that we should return to Santiago with all the gold that has been taken, in which case we should all be ruined men, and Diego Velazquez would take the gold as he did before?' "

They then reminded Bernal Diaz that he had been three times in that land and had gained nothing, and they ended their address to him by suggesting that they should agree to form a settlement in the name of His Majesty, the Emperor, that they should elect Cortes as Captain, and inform His Majesty of what they done.

It was not possible that these private dealings could go on unobserved by the opposite faction. A camp is not a cabinet, and secrets leak out even from a cabinet. The followers of Velazquez protested against such under-hand proceedings; but their protestations were too late. When the proclamation for return was made known to the soldiers, they became furious with Cortes, and declared that they would not go back to Cuba. It was remembered how ill Grijalva had been received by Velazquez, because he had returned without founding any settlement. Uttering such complaints as they were fairly entitled to make, they came into the presence of Cortes. This crafty leader had his followers now exactly in the position in which he must have desired to see them. He affected a difficulty in acceding to their wishes, and the tone which he adopted on the occasion is well described, by one who heard him, in the words of the sly proverb, "You may entreat me to do that which I like to do" (*tu me lo ruegas, y yo me lo quiero*). A speech has been made for him¹ which probably does not differ much in substance from that which he really uttered.

¹ DE SOLIS, *Conquista de la Nueva-España*, lib. 2, cap. 6.

192 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

He tells the clamorous malcontents of his having been informed that it was their desire to go: to please them he had yielded; but he was glad to find them in a disposition more fitting for the service of their King and the duty of good Spaniards; however, as he did not wish to have unwilling soldiers, it must now be understood, that whoever desired to return to Cuba could do so, and that he would provide for the embarkation of all those who would not voluntarily follow his fortunes.

Just at this period, or a little before, when Cortes and his companions were feeling somewhat desolate and disheartened, there came messengers from the chief of a neighbouring territory, called Cempoala, desiring the friendship of the Spaniards. The town of Cempoala was on the way to Chiahuitzla, that port of which Cortes had heard from those he had sent out to discover one. A proceeding now took place which deserves the attention of the world at the present day, and which many a modern nation might well imitate in its attempts to colonize. Cortes began to take steps for founding his town,—not, however, by choosing a spot of ground, and commencing to build upon it, but by selecting the men who were to fill the chief offices in the town. Certainly, it would appear as if, in those ages, they had more belief in men, and appreciated more the difference of one man from another, than the world does now.

Cortes had no intention of making his settlement at, or near, San Juan de Ulua, but at Chiahuitzla, where he had heard of tolerable anchorage. A Spanish town, however, was somewhat like a Roman camp:¹ there were

¹ "The camp of a Roman legion presented the appearance of a fortified city. As soon as the space was marked out, the pioneers carefully levelled the ground, and removed every impediment that might interrupt its perfect regularity. Its form was an exact quadrangle; and we may calculate that a square of about seven hundred yards was sufficient for the encampment of twenty thousand Romans; though a similar number of our own troops would expose to the enemy a front of more than treble that extent. In the midst of the camp, the prætorium, or general's quarters, rose above the others; the cavalry, the infantry, and the auxiliaries, occupied their respective stations; the streets were broad, and perfectly straight, and a vacant space of two hundred feet was left on all sides, between the tents and the rampart. The rampart itself was usually twelve feet high, armed

certain fixed points in it, and the difficulty was, not so much what should be done, as who should be appointed to do it.

Cortes first took solemn and official possession of the country in the name of the Emperor. He then named his town, which at present existed only on paper, calling it "La Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz."¹ He then appointed the requisite officers. It appears, too, that either he, or his party, suggested, that a formal requisition should be made to him, apparently in writing, demanding in a most peremptory manner that the main object of the expedition should be changed from that of trade to that of colonization; and that he should take upon himself to appoint the *Alcaldes* and *Regidores* of the new town.² The *Alcaldes* named were Alonso Hernandez Puertocarrero (a native of Medellin, the birthplace of Cortes) and Francisco de Montejo. The *Regidores* were Alonso Davila, Pedro de Alvarado, with his brother Alonso, and Gonzalo de Sandoval, also a native of Medellin, a young man of twenty-two, who will afterwards take a great part in the conquest. Juan de Escalante was appointed the *Alguazil Mayor*. Cristoval de Olid was to be the Master of the Camp (*el Maestre*

with a line of strong and intricate palisades, and defended by a ditch of twelve feet in depth as well as in breadth. This important labour was performed by the hands of the legionaries themselves; to whom the use of the spade and the pickaxe was no less familiar than that of the sword or pilum."—GIBBON'S *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, i, cap. i.

¹ "Because they had arrived in that country on the Friday of Passion week."—GOMARA, *Crónica de la Nueva-España*, cap. 30.

² "And we all jointly determined this in unison, with one mind and will, that we should make a requisition to the said captain, in which we said that since he saw how much it was proper to the service of God our Lord, and Your Majesty's interest that this country should be colonized, giving him the reasons that before have been related to Your Highness, that we required that he should immediately cease trading in the way that had been done because it would ruin the country in many ways and was bad for Your Majesty's interests. And so we asked and required that he should at once nominate *alcaldes* and *regidores* in the name of Your Highnesses for the town which had been founded, making certain formal declarations of what we threatened against him if he did not do it."—*Col. de Doc. Ind.*, i, p. 448.

del Campo).¹ There were other minor appointments which need not be recorded. No one who knows anything of Cortes needs to be told that these appointments were skilfully made, affording due encouragement to his friends, and offering the requisite temptation to those amongst his enemies who might be gained over.

The foundations for authority were now laid, and we must own that the deficiency of original authority was endeavoured to be supplied in the most skilful manner. Recounting the various steps in due order, we find that it was voted universally, or at least determined by the majority, that the object of the expedition, as stated in the original instructions (of the purport of which they had not been aware), must be entirely changed, and accordingly that these instructions did not apply to the changed circumstances. Then, the process may be summed up as follows:—Cortes rises from the mass as their chosen leader; and, at their request, appoints officers. When these are appointed, he recognizes their authority to the utmost extent. He appears bare-headed before them, and renounces his authority of Captain-General and Justicia-Mayor, placing it in the hands of the *Alcaldes* and *Regidores*. He then quits the assembled officers of government, leaving them to confer amongst themselves. They, as might be expected, resolve upon reappointing him; and the next morning come to him, to make their determination formally known,—which intelligence he receives with proper official gravity, as if it were some new thing to him.² He is pleased to accept the appointment, and they are allowed to kiss the hands of the new Captain-General and Justicia-Mayor, who is thus placed with some show of legality, at the head of the military and the civil services.³

¹ [The *Maestre del Campo* was the Spanish rank of Colonel, but here it seems rather an appointment as *Maestre del Campo General* equivalent to the modern Chief of the Staff. The last two appointments in the text appear to belong to the field force more than to the town.]

² "The next morning they went in a body to seek Cortes, who, as if he knew nothing of the matter, asked what they wanted with him."—HERRERA, *Hist. de las Indias*, dec. 2, lib. 5, cap. 7.

³ [By the new appointment he was to receive one-fifth of the proceeds

AND SENDS DIRECT TO CHARLES V. 195

In the midst of all these proceedings, Cortes had not forgotten the friendly invitation which he had received from the Cacique of Cempoala; and, indeed, he is stated to have made use of this invitation as an argument to show that there were alliances which might be formed against the Mexicans, and people with whom he might negotiate, when he had once made a settlement.¹ Nothing, therefore, could be more fortunate than this offer of welcome from Cempoala, which Cortes did not fail in due time to embrace; and, marching to their town, was very kindly received. Thence he moved on to Chiahuitzla, still in the same territory, where also he was well received by order of the Cacique of Cempoala. Near to Chiahuitzla, Cortes, working with his own hands, founded his town of Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz;² and the appointed officers took charge of it. This town was of much importance to Cortes: it was a stronghold in the rear, and Juan de Escalante, who had the chief command, was a devoted friend, on whom Cortes could rely.

The town being now founded, it was resolved, in full council, that information should be sent to Charles the Fifth of what had been done; and the two alcaldes Alonso Hernandez de Puertocarrero and Francisco de Montejo, were chosen for this purpose. They went to Spain, carrying rich gifts with them, but unfortunately

of trade or conquest after deduction of the royal fifth; the original arrangement, under which they left Cuba, divided two-thirds among the outfitters of the voyage of whom there must have been others besides Velazquez. Apparently their interests were no more safeguarded than were the Governor's.]

¹ "And, further, that from there friendship and treaties could more easily be obtained with the Indian peoples and tribes who, like Cempoala and others, had quarrels with, and were enemies of, Montezuma's subjects."—GOMARA, *Crónica de la Nueva-España*, cap. 30.

² See the proceedings (mentioned in GOMARA, cap. 37, and incidentally confirmed by CHIMALPAIN and BUSTAMANTE, cap. 35), in reference to the actual building of the town, when sites were marked out for the church, the grand square, the town hall, the wharf, and the shambles; and the town was called Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz, as they had agreed when the Council of San Juan de Ulua was nominated (como havian acordado, quando se nombró el Cabildo de San Juan de Ulhua).

196 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

found the Emperor absent, and were ill received by the Bishop of Burgos, the head of the colonial administration, who favoured Velazquez, and considered these messengers as persons who had been concerned in a revolt against the constituted authorities.¹

Meanwhile, Cortes did not hesitate to use his newly-acquired authority with vigour, and discovering a conspiracy which was formed by some of the party of Velazquez to leave the army, and to give information to that Governor which might enable him to seize the messengers of Cortes on their way to Spain, he caused two of the principal conspirators to be put to death, and inflicted minor punishments upon the others. "I remember," says Bernal Diaz, "that when Cortes signed that sentence, he said with deep sighs and signs of suffering, 'Oh! who would not be ignorant of writing, so that he might not have to sign the death-warrants of men.'"²

It was during his stay in the territory of Cempoala, that Cortes adopted that determination to destroy his fleet, and so to cut off all means of retreat from his army which has become one of the great texts in history. I say "adopted," because though Cortes himself may have originated the idea of destroying the fleet, and then have insinuated it into the minds of his adherents,³ it is certain that they also counselled the destruction of the fleet. There were many good reasons for this counsel. It was necessary to bind the two factions together in some indissoluble manner. Again, in such a small body, where every man was valuable, the sailors were an important addition to the little army. Even those who were disabled men, or unsuited for a marching expedition, sufficed for garrison duty in the new town of Vera Cruz. The magnanimity of the transaction is diminished by its evident policy; and,

¹ [See *ante*, p. 52.]

² BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 57.

[One of the two men hanged was Juan Escudero the Alguazil who had seized Cortes when he left the church; see *ante*, p. 170.]

³ "Numerous consultations were held with Cortes about the method of war and the march into the interior in every detail; and we who were his friends counselled him that he should not leave behind him a single ship afloat."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 58.

with regard to Cortes himself, it required no extraordinary valour on his part. He had cut off all retreat for himself, when he refused to allow himself to be superseded by the orders of Velazquez. For Cæsar, to pass the Rubicon might have been a great resolve, but for his soldiers, nothing: in the destruction of the Spanish fleet, the men incurred a danger, which their Commander had already brought upon himself, and thus reduced themselves to the level of his own desperation. Juan de Escalante was entrusted with the execution of the orders that Cortes gave for the fleet's destruction, which, after the anchors, sails, and cables had been taken out, was summarily effected.

Cortes continued to maintain a strict amity with the Cempoalans; it was in an expedition that the Spaniards made, while in this territory, that he caused a man to be hanged for stealing two fowls. The man was cut down, however, when half dead, by Alvarado.

While Cortes was in Cempoala, Montezuma's collectors of tribute came into the country. The Cempoalans complained much of the Mexican King's exactions, saying that he demanded their children for slaves and for sacrifices. Cortes seized the officers, and ordered that no tribute should be paid. But, privately, he let two of them go free with a peaceful message to Montezuma, and the others he preserved from the fury of the Cempoalans, who, when they had overcome their terror of the great King's officers, by seeing them imprisoned, were very desirous to turn the tables upon these Mexicans, and to offer them up as a sacrifice to the local divinities.

This is one of many instances which show the vigour and crafty wisdom of Cortes, in his preparations for the conquest of Mexico.¹ Indeed, his conduct at this period of his fortunes might be taken as a model by all those who may be placed in similar circumstances. As a snake through tangled grass and herbage, or rather, like an agile wild beast through the forest, now lightly leaping

¹ [As the result of this politic move Montezuma, when he received the report of the two liberated officers, sent another embassy instead of the army he was preparing.]

198 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

over the brushwood, now bounding along the open space under great trees, always with an eye to prey, always with a soft footfall, so did the politic Cortes move through the difficulties which beset his position,—the wilds of dubious followers, the snares of uncertain allies, the perils of an unknown country, and the weight of countless numbers brought to bear upon his little band, which was but the scenic counterfeit of an army.

These sacrifices of human beings, which the Mexicans and the Cempoalans were so ready to inflict upon each other, were an abomination to Cortes; and he resolved to put an end to them in this province, and, indeed, to the whole scheme of idolatry of the Cempoalans; which he accomplished by main force, sending a body of troops to hurl the idols down from the temple. The use of violence, if ever justifiable in matters of religion, is so in warring against a cruel creed which has for its groundwork the fears of men, and is perpetually cemented by the blood of the weak amongst its worshippers. It was not, however, to be supposed that a people who had been oppressed by a malign religion for so many years would part with their burden easily. The most galling fetters come to be believed in as amulets, mistaken for ornaments, and fondly clung to as supports. Accordingly, the Cempoalans rushed to arms, that they might avenge this insult to their gods. But Cortes, whose Violence, being for the most part the violence of the head, was never far removed from her severe, but serene sister, Policy, took the precaution at once to seize upon the Cacique and the principal chiefs, and to declare that they should be put to death if any outrage was attempted against the Spaniards. The threat was successful; and the people were pacified, or rather awed into submission. Cortes then had the walls of the temple cleared of blood. He erected an altar there, changed the priests' vestments from black to white, and gave *them* (what policy again!) the charge of this altar. He also set up a cross, and taught the natives to make wax candles, and to keep them burning before the altar.

The next step of Cortes was to receive the Cempoalans into the vassalage of the King of Spain. Certainly this

man's audacity throughout borders upon the ludicrous; and the way in which the strange tale was first told, in great official documents, does not diminish to an intelligent reader the grotesque wildness of the transactions, though narrated as if they were mere matters of course.

On the 16th of August 1519, Cortes set off for Mexico, resolved to see, in the quaint language of the unsuspected historian who accompanied him, "what sort of a thing the great Montezuma was of whom they had heard so much."¹

Cortes himself had already assured his Sovereign that he would take Montezuma, dead or alive, if he did not bring him into vassalage to the Spanish crown.²

This is not the place for giving any more than a very rapid account of the advance of Cortes; but, as the nature and extent of his successes bear closely on the subject of this history, it will be advisable to show what were the advantages which each side possessed.

The Mexicans had immense superiority in point of numbers. They were not, like the Indians of the islands, a people living in huts, but in good, stone-built edifices. They formed a mighty kingdom, mighty at least in appearance, with dependent states, that paid tribute to the King of Mexico, but which, as soon appeared, were by no means devoted to him. The weapons of the Mexicans were lances, darts, bow and arrows,³ slings and stones, and a kind of sword of a most fearful nature and aspect.⁴

¹ BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 53.

² "I assured Your Highness that he should be taken either dead or alive, or become a subject of Your Majesty's crown."—LORENZANA, p. 39.

³ "It was usual for a number of archers to assemble together, and throw up an ear of maize into the air, at which they immediately shot with such quickness and dexterity, that before it could reach the ground it was stripped of every grain."—CLAVIGERO'S *History of Mexico*, book 7, p. 367—note.

⁴ "The *Maquahuitl*, called by the Spaniards *Spada*, or sword, as it was the weapon among the Mexicans, which was equivalent to the sword of the old continent, was a stout stick, three feet and a half long, and about four inches broad, armed on each side with a sort of razors of the stone *itzli* (obsidian), extraordinarily sharp, fixed and firmly fastened to the stick with gum lack, which were about three inches

200 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

I have recounted the means on the Mexican side, which consisted of innumerable men, who, as it proved afterwards, possessed a fierce and pertinacious bravery like that of the Jews—weapons of offence which would not have been contemptible anywhere in a previous age, but which were becoming so amongst Europeans in the sixteenth century¹—a consolidated kingdom, of which the capital, at any rate, was devoted to its sovereign—and substantial edifices.²

long, one or two inches broad, and as thick as the blade of our ancient swords. This weapon was so keen, that once it entirely beheaded a horse at one stroke, according to the affirmation of Acosta; but the first stroke only was to be feared; for the razors became soon blunt. They tied this weapon by a string to their arm lest they might lose it in any violent conflict.”—CLAVIGERO, *Hist. of Mexico*, book 7, p. 367. These are the words of ACOSTA:—“Their arms were sharp knives made of flints set on both sides of a stick, and this was so powerful a weapon that they affirmed that with one blow it could divide a horse’s neck.”—*Hist. Nat. y Moral de Indias*, lib. 6, cap. 26.—The reproduction among the local maps at the end of this volume is a representation of this formidable weapon.

[Every child was trained from babehood in warlike exercises, and at the age of fifteen was allowed to join the armies. Weapons, stored in the temples, were only served out for practice or before the departure of expeditions. The dart, considered the principal weapon, was a short spear made of caulwood, pointed with flint, obsidian, or copper; sometimes it was of trident shape. The bow was also of caulwood, and the Mexican bow was short, but some tribes are said to have used bows five and a half feet long; poisoned arrows were not used north of the Isthmus of Darien. The four quarters of the city furnished the primary partition of the tribe into what may be called divisions, these four divisions were split into masses of 200 to 400 men, and, further, eventually into squads of twenty men; each body could be distinguished by its badge of peculiarly coloured or arranged feathers. (A. F. Bandelier in *Peabody Museum Reports*, ii).]

¹ On the other hand, their defensive armour was good, though not to be compared to that of the Spaniards.

[A target of canes netted together and strong enough to resist a cross-bow shot at anything but close range; also a frock of quilted cotton, so effective that the Spaniards afterwards adopted it.]

² It has been said, that “the victories of Cortes had been gained over savages who had no letters, who were ignorant of the use of metals, who had not broken in a single animal to labour, who wielded no better weapons than those which could be made out of sticks, flints, and fish-bones, who regarded a horse-soldier as a monster, half man and half beast, who took an arquebusier for a sorcerer, able to scatter the thunder and lightning of the skies.”—MR. MACAULAY’S *Essay on Lord Clive*.

These weapons, however, could hardly have been as contemptible

On his side Cortes had valiant captains, trained men-at-arms, a small park of artillery, these wonderful horses, and his own dissembling mind and vast audacity—cut off from all retreat. The difficulties, however, in his own camp, which his uncertain position created for him, were very great; and his enterprize, considered in all respects, was, perhaps, as difficult as any feat of arms the world has ever contemplated.

as they are thus represented, for we find that, at the first discharge of missiles in the first battle with Cortes, the Indians wounded seventy men, two of them fatally. Neither is it much to their discredit, that they did not break in animals to labour, as there were none for them to break in. Now that they possess horses, there are no people in the world more expert with them, as may be seen in the case of those who make use of the lasso. Had the Mexicans possessed horses in those days, there would not have been the slightest chance for the Spaniards, unless they had come in large armies, in which case the difficulty of finding supplies would have been almost an insuperable obstacle.

CHAPTER III

CORTES MARCHES TO TLASCALA—GREAT BATTLE WITH THE
TLASCALANS—THE TLASCALAN SENATE ALLIES ITSELF TO
CORTES—CORTES ENTERS CHOLULA—THE GREAT MASSACRE
THERE—FIRST SIGHT OF MEXICO—CORTES ENTERS MEXICO
—DESCRIPTION OF THE CITY

THE next step which Cortes took was to march towards the territory of Tlascala. His friends at Cempoala had informed him that the people of that territory were friends of theirs, and very especial enemies (*muy capitales enemigos*) of Montezuma. The Tlascalan form of government was republican, and Cortes compares it to those of Genoa, Venice, and Pisa.¹ Before his approach, he sent four Cempoalans to the senate of Tlascala, telling the senate that he was coming through their country on his way to Mexico, that he had freed the Cempoalans from Montezuma's yoke, and that he wished to know what grievance the senate had against the Mexicans, that he might make the Tlascalan cause his own. Such, at least, it is likely was the substance of what Cortes wrote to the Tlascalans.

The Tlascalan senate received this crafty message, or whatever part the ambassadors (who probably spoke on behalf of their own nation) chose to report of it, and

¹ "In the system of government that has existed until now it resembles the states of Venice, Genoa, and Pisa, because there is no supreme authority vested in one person."—LORENZANA, p. 59.

[The keen sagacity of Cortes recognised at once a condition that was afterwards masked by the ignorance of the Spanish historians. In all these tribes the government was vested in a tribal council which elected the military and civil officers of the tribe, and could also remove them. The Aztecs had progressed a step further towards king-making, in that the military office—to them the most important—was becoming hereditary in a family; but there was no Aztec empire, raiding rather than consolidation being the object of the confederated tribes.]

proceeded to debate upon the subject. One great chief advised friendship with the Spaniards, as being a race more like gods than men, who would force their way even if the Tlascalans should oppose them. It would be wise, therefore, to accept their friendship, and to make alliance with them against the common enemy, Montezuma. These arguments he strengthened by appeals to omens and prophecies. Another senator said that the Spaniards were like some monstrous beasts cast upon the sea-shore. He lightly put aside the omens, on account of their incertitude. He probably appealed to what the Spaniards had already done—mentioned their demands for gold, and, no doubt, if he were aware of it, described the indignities they had offered to the gods of the country,—undoubted deities in his eyes, whatever the new-comers might be.¹ His voice was for war: and such was the decision of the assembly,—as indeed might have been expected from the chiefs of a nation so jealous of interference that they had denied themselves the use of salt, because it came from Montezuma's country, and they were unwilling to have more intercourse with the Mexicans than they could help.

Notwithstanding the opposition to be expected from the Tlascalans, Cortes persevered in making his entrance into their country, and had to fight his way thither. After three or four severe engagements, in one of which, as he tells us, he had to encounter one hundred and forty-nine thousand adversaries,² "who covered the whole

¹ I will not by any means be answerable for the exactitude of these speeches. There are more elaborate ones given in TORQUEMADA, HERRERA, and CLAVIGERO — all manifestly proceeding from one source, and tinged, I think, by a Spanish colour. I have no doubt, however, that great speeches were made on the occasion.

² It may a little diminish the surprize of the reader, at such extraordinary numbers being met and vanquished by the small army of Cortes, to find that they attacked in battalions of only 20,000 men.—"Happily for Cortes, the Tlascalans did not attack simultaneously, but in masses of 20,000 men, which succeeded each other in turn as each was repulsed. The combat lasted two days, and the Spaniards, having killed a number of Tlascalans without losing a single man, the natives were convinced that they were under a spell, or that the Spaniards were gods."—IXTLIXOCHITL, *Hist. des Chichimèques*, chap. 83. TERNAUX-COMPANS, *Voyages*.

country,"¹ he at last succeeded in bringing the Tlascalans to terms. But this object was not attained before the Tlascalan General (Xicotencatl) had made great efforts, by craft as well as force, to overcome the Spaniards. An incident worth recording occurred when the Tlascalans sent certain spies to the camp of Cortes. These spies, forty in number, had as a pretext for their coming, that they brought provisions to the camp, and certain victims (four miserable old women) for sacrifice. When the forty spies arrived, they began to sprinkle incense upon Cortes, and then they explained their embassy in the following words: "Our Captain Xicotencatl sends you this present, which, if you are *teules*,² as those of Cempoala say, you will eat, and if you wish sacrifices, take these four women and sacrifice them, and you can eat of their flesh and their hearts. We have not hitherto sacrificed before you, as we did not know your manner of sacrifice. And if you are men, eat of these fowls and bread and fruit. If, however, you are benignant *teules*, we bring you incense and parrots' feathers; make your sacrifice with these things." Cortes replied, that it was not the custom of the Spaniards to put any one to death for sacrifice, and, besides, as long as the Tlascalans made war upon him, there were enough of them to slay. Afterwards, discovering the stratagem,³ he cut off the hands or thumbs of seventeen of the spies, and sent them back thus maimed to their Captain. At last messengers of peace did come from the Tlascalans, and their desire for alliance with Cortes must in no respect have been diminished by the arrival, about this time, of ambassadors from Montezuma, who came bringing new presents, and offering, as Cortes says in his letter to Charles the Fifth, vassalage on the part of Montezuma to that Monarch.

The things most to be noted, in the march of Cortes from Cempoala to Tlascala, are the populousness and

¹ LORENZANA, p. 52.

² Minor deities.—"Taking us for *Teules*, which are their idols."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 72.

³ [They were to fire the camp preparatory to a night attack, because if the Spaniards were children of the sun their miraculous powers might be expected to wane with the sunlight.]

signs of civilization which he meets with, and his own vigorous sagacity. At one point of his march he comes upon a valley¹ where, for four successive leagues, there was a continuous line of houses, and the Lord of the valley lived in a fortress such as was not to be found in the half of Spain, surrounded by walls and barbicans and moats.² He also came upon the great wall of Tlascala, which was nine feet high, and twenty feet broad, with a battlement a foot and a half in breadth. This wall was six miles long, and had an entrance constructed like a ravelin of that day.³

The vigorous sagacity of Cortes was shown in his resolution to listen to no bad omen, considering, as he says, that God is above Nature⁴—in not being dismayed by the faint-heartedness of some of his companions, whom he overhears declaring that he is mad, and that they will return without him,—and in the ready craft with which he penetrates and defeats the plans of the Tlascalans, who thought to surprize him by a night attack.

The Tlascalans endeavoured to set Cortes against the Mexicans: the Mexican ambassadors did all they could to make him distrust the Tlascalans. It was a situation eminently suited to the genius of that crafty conqueror; and, he says, it gave him much pleasure to see their discord, for it seemed to further his design, and he

¹ The valley of Yztacmastitán.

² "The estates of this lord extend for three or four leagues continuously, house after house, situated along the banks of a small river which runs along the bottom of the valley. His house stands on a lofty hill, and is a better fortress than is to be found in half Spain, well protected with walls, barbicans, and moats."—LORENZANA, p. 48.

³ "On leaving the valley I met with a great wall of dry [uncemented] stone about 9 feet high and 20 feet broad, which extended across the whole valley from one mountain to the other. Along its whole extent there was a breastwork of a foot and a-half thick to enable them to fight from the top of the wall. There was only one entrance, ten paces wide, and at this entrance one portion of the wall enclosed the other closely, in the manner of a ravelin, for forty paces."—LORENZANA, p. 49.

⁴ "Although all my men said that I ought to return because this was a bad omen, I continued my road, considering that God is above nature."—LORENZANA, p. 54. [Five of his horses had broken down and had to be sent back.]

206 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

recollected the saying in the Scriptures, that "a kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation," and was fortified by the secular proverb, "From the wood comes the man who is to burn it."¹ "In secret," he says, "I thanked each party for the advice which they offered me, and gave each of them credit (i.e. in words) for more friendship towards me than the other."²

Meanwhile, with the consent, and, indeed, upon the entreaty, of the Tlascalcan chiefs, he had entered the town of Tlascala³ on the 18th of September 1520. He was received with every demonstration of affection and regard by the Tlascalans. Their priests, as he entered the town, sprinkled incense upon him and his soldiers. As, however, they were repulsive-looking creatures, with matted hair,⁴ from which dripped blood (their own blood, for they were very cruel⁵ to themselves), their incensing must have been much more of a horror than a pleasure, and it must have been a great relief to have seen the hideous priests file off, and the Indian girls approach with little pyramids⁶ of roses, which they offered to the principal

¹ OVIEDO, *Hist. Gen. y Nat.*, lib. 33, cap. 4.

² "I had no little pleasure in seeing the discord and opposition between them, because it seemed to me to help my purpose much, and would enable me to more easily subjugate them according to the common saying, *de Monte*, etc. Also I applied to this case the authority of the Evangelist who says, *Every kingdom divided against itself shall be rendered desolate*, and I dissembled with both parties, to each secretly expressing gratitude for the advice given me, and gave each of them credit for more friendship towards me than the other."—LORENZANA, p. 61.

³ "Tlascala, that is to say, Place of Bread, or Baked Bread."—GOMARA, *Crónica*, cap. 55.

⁴ "Some of them had on long white cloaks after the fashion of surplices, with capes, as worn by our canons. The hair of their heads was long and matted together, so that it could not have been put into any order without cutting it off, and it was full of blood which trickled down over their ears, for they had been sacrificing that very day."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 75.

⁵ "The effusion of blood was frequent and of daily occurrence in some priest or other, and to this they gave the name of *Tlamacazqui*. They pricked themselves with the very sharp thorns of the maguay [the American aloe], and pierced themselves in many parts of the body, especially the ears, lips, tongue, and the fleshy parts of the legs and arms."—CLAVIGERO, *Storia Antica del Messico*, ii, lib. 6, p. 52.

⁶ Note the predominance of the pyramidal shape.

captains. When the Tlascalans had sought the Spanish General's friendship, they told him what struggles they had always made to maintain their independence. They had, however, fought him by night, and fought him by day, and had been compelled to confess their inferiority. When they had once confessed this to him, and had sought his friendship, it seems as if they had thoroughly thrown aside all enmity, and meant to abide by the friendly words they uttered.

Their town was worthy of the intelligence of its inhabitants. Cortes says that it was much larger and much stronger than Granada, and contained far more people ¹ than that town at the time of the Moorish Conquest. There was a daily market, frequented by thirty thousand persons : which could boast, among its wares, of gold, silver, precious stones, earthenware equal to the best in Spain at that time, wood, charcoal, and medicines. As a proof of the civilization of the Tlascalans, we may notice that they had public baths. Their houses were built of bricks, sun-burnt and kiln-burnt, or of stone, according to the means of the builder. These houses were large, but not lofty, and had terraces upon the roofs. The Tlascalans had not arrived at that advanced stage in the art of building, which is indicated by the existence of doors ; but they used matting instead, which was adorned with bells made of metal or sea-shells,² that gave due notice of entrance and exit.

The government was committed to four chiefs, who depended on the senate, and each of whom ruled a

¹ It was afterwards ascertained that in the whole province of Tlascala there were 500,000 heads of families.—“There are in this province, according to a return prepared by my order, 500,000 heads of families.”—LORENZANA, p. 60.

² “The houses, terraced at the top on beams, some of mud walls, some boarded, some of brick, and some of lime and stone, according to each man's ability. They had no upper floors, but all on the ground, having large rooms of unusual shape ; as little had they doors or shutters, but mats made of reeds which were taken down and put up at pleasure, with hawk's bells of gold or copper or other metals, or sea shells, hanging on them to make a noise when they were taken down or opened or shut.”—HERRERA, *Hist. de las Indias*, dec. 2, lib. 6, cap. 12.

208 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

quarter of the city, which appears to have been strictly governed.

Almost the only transaction of Cortes at Tlascala of which we have a clear account, serves to illustrate his untiring zeal for religion. The Tlascalan chiefs thought they could not welcome these resplendent strangers better, or secure their friendship more certainly, than by presenting their daughters to them as wives. Upon this occasion, Cortes, whose religious zeal had already been restrained by Father de Olmedo, took the opportunity of explaining the Christian Faith to the Tlascalans, and endeavoured to make it a condition that if these Indian ladies were received as wives, the Tlascalans should quit their idolatry, and worship the true God. The chiefs remonstrated against such a proceeding, and intimated that their people would die sooner than cease to sacrifice to their gods. Upon this, Father de Olmedo again interfered. He said that it would not be right to make them Christians by force. That what had been done in Cempoala, in throwing down the idols there, was against his judgment, and that such things were useless until the Indians should have some knowledge of the true Faith. "What was the good," he remarked, "of taking away the idols from one temple, when they would set up similar ones immediately in another?"¹ He relied upon a conversion which required more time and milder means. Such was the substance of what Father de Olmedo said, anticipating, perhaps, that Cortes would not hesitate to take extreme measures in carrying out a point which he had so much at heart. The advice of the good Father, much in advance of the temper of his time, and indeed of our time too, seems to have prevailed in this instance; and the work of conversion to Christianity was left to the truly Christian methods of reasoning and persuasion. A conversation is given by a modern historian, which a certain Tlascalan lord, named Magisca, the one who in the senate had advocated peace with the Spaniards, held with Cortes on the subject of religion. He perceived, he said, that the Spaniards had something like a sacrifice,

¹ See BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 76.

but yet there was no victim; and the Tlascalans "could not imagine how there was to be a sacrifice unless some one should die for the safety of the rest."¹ Then, again, though willing to admit that the God of the Spaniards was a very great God, greater than his own gods, he yet maintained that each god had power in his own country, and that many gods were necessary, one against tempests, another for harvests, a third for war.² In short, the Tlascalans were firm in their idolatry. They were willing, however, to give way in a temporal matter which Cortes had very early proposed to them,—namely, to become vassals of the King of Spain. But we may safely conclude, that they understood but little of what they undertook to do when they gave this promise of vassalage.

After staying twenty days in Tlascala, Cortes, accompanied by some thousands³ of his Tlascalan allies, proceeded on his way to Mexico. He had been much solicited by Montezuma's ambassadors to come to Cholula and await their master's response in that town.⁴ The Tlascalans, on the other hand, had warned him of some treacherous intent on the part of the Cholulans and of the Mexican ambassadors.

Cortes, however, marched on Cholula, but met with

¹ DE SOLIS, *Conquista de la Nueva-España*, lib. 3, cap. 3. I do not know what authority De Solis had for this conversation; but the remarks of Magisca have some air of verisimilitude.

² The Tlascalans were much astonished to find that the Spaniards worshipped (so they interpreted it) a cross:—"In the great hall of Xicotencatl's palace he arranged an oratory with a cross and an image of Our Lady, where mass was said nearly every day. He set up, with great solemnity, another cross in the hall, in which he received the senate. The Tlascalans were greatly astonished at seeing the Spaniards adore the god they called Tonacaquahuitl, or the Food-giver."—IXTLILXOCHITL, *Histoire des Chichimèques*, chap. 84. TERNAUX-COMANS, *Voyages*.

³ There is a discrepancy in the accounts which CORTES and BERNAL DIAZ give of the numbers.

⁴ [Cortes appears to have sent to Cholula, where the arrival of his messengers roused heated discussion. Most of the chiefs were averse to receiving Cortes, but a few were in his favour, and these secretly visited him at Tlascala and invited him to come to their town. Cortes sent them back with a curt demand for a formal and open invitation, and a threat of war if it was not given. Therefore a large deputation came to him with presents and the invitation; but the Tlascalans at once inferred that treachery was intended from the absence of certain ceremonies. (BANDELIER, *El Dorado*, p. 266. New York, 1893.)]

210 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

a cold and uncertain reception there. It was a grand town. Bernal Diaz thus describes it. "It had, at that time, above a hundred very lofty towers, which were adoratories, where stood their idols; and I remember," he adds, "that, when we entered that city, and beheld such lofty towers glistening in the sun, it seemed like Valladolid." Cortes gives a still more favourable account of Cholula. "It is a more beautiful city from without than any in Spain, for it is many-towered and lies in a plain. And I certify to Your Highness that I counted from a mosque there four hundred other mosques, and as many towers, and all of them towers of mosques. It is the city most fit for Spaniards to live in of any that I have seen here, for it has some untilled ground (meads) and water, so that cattle might be bred, a thing which no other of the cities that we have seen possesses; for such is the multitude of people who dwell in these parts that there is not a hand-breadth of ground which is not cultivated."¹ Here Cortes found other messengers from Montezuma, but these did not come apparently with any message to Cortes, but to prepare an ambushade by which twenty thousand Mexican troops were to fall upon the Spaniards in the streets of Cholula.² This scheme was betrayed to Donna Marina by a Cholulan woman; the Tlascalans had also suspected it, and Bernal Diaz says that he remarked that the Cholulans withdrew from them with a mysterious kind of sneer on their faces. Cortes seized on two or three of the Cholulans, who confessed the plot, laying the blame on Montezuma. Calling his men together, Cortes informed them of the danger, and of his intention to punish the Cholulans. To the townspeople he pretended that he was about to set off the

¹ LORENZANA, p. 67.

[Mr. A. F. Bandelier, who has studied the "massacre of Cholula" on the spot with the aid of the Indian paintings preserved at Cuanhtlantzinco and local tradition, questions the accuracy of the Spanish description, due, he thinks, to their lack of comprehension of the novel and bewildering sights continually succeeding each other.—*Op. cit.*, p. 260.]

² [Mr. Bandelier flatly denies the possibility of this, and points out that being hereditary enemies the Cholulans would not have permitted them to concentrate such a force on their territory.]

next morning, for which purpose he required food, attendants for the baggage, and two thousand men of war. These they agreed to furnish him. On the next morning he mounted his horse, summoned the Cholulan caciques round him, informed them that he had discovered their treachery, and then commenced an attack upon them. He had placed a guard in the outer court of the building where he was lodged, to prevent escape. A musket was fired as a signal; and then the Spanish soldiers set upon the unfortunate Cholulans in a way which, as Bernal Diaz says, they would for ever remember, "for we slew many of them, and others were burnt alive; so little did the promises of their false gods avail them."¹

Cortes had the Cholulans now completely at his mercy:² he appointed a new Cacique, the former one having been slain in the conflict; addressed the priests and chiefs on the subject of religion; destroyed the cages full of men and boys fattening for sacrifice; and, but for Father de Olmedo's persuasion, he would have pulled down and broken to pieces the idols, but he contented himself with erecting an altar and a cross.

Meanwhile, the Mexican ambuscade returned to Mexico, bringing the unwelcome news to their Monarch of the failure of the enterprize: and Cortes, quitting Cholula, marched on with much circumspection, "the beard always on the shoulder," towards the capital.

It was when they had advanced about eight leagues from Cholula, in the gorge between two lofty mountains, that Cortes and his little army, looking northwards, first

¹ LAS CASAS, in a work, the only one of his which has been much seen and circulated in the world, gives a most unfair account of the massacre of Cholula, entirely omitting the treachery of the Cholulans, which, or rather the belief in which, was the sole cause of the massacre; whereas, he makes the motive of Cortes to have been a wish to spread terror:—"The Spaniards agreed to perpetrate a massacre there—or make an example as they called it—in order to sow the fear of them and their valour in every corner of those countries."—*Brevissima Relacion de la destruycion de las Indias*, p. 17. Sevilla, 1552.

² [Mr. Bandelier maintains that there could not have been any smoking ruins as described by Prescott, that all the Indian women and children had been sent out of the town the day before that fixed for the attempt, and that probably not more than 500 Indians perished, *op. cit.*, p. 279. The highest estimate—6000—is that of Las Casas.]

212 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

saw before them the great valley of Mexico, with the lakes, the central city, and the smaller tributary towns in the neighbourhood. Historians have made much of this first view of Mexico, forgetting how little thought a busied captain and a band of fortune-seeking adventurers have to bestow upon what is picturesque and beautiful. Besides, it is, perhaps, the parting, and not the approaching glance, which discovers the full beauty of any scene in nature; or, at least, makes men inclined to linger upon it. But Cortes was hurrying on to conquest, with a mind occupied by fanaticism, ambition, and that which is dearer than all to men who aspire to command, namely, a wish to be right in what they have once determined upon. He, therefore, tells with a coolness, which forms a ludicrous contrast to the glowing descriptions of historians, of his first beholding the territory of Montezuma.¹

The common soldiers are represented to have been divided in their opinions upon what they beheld. The more resolute amongst them, looking down upon the wondrous cities of that mighty plain, thought of the booty it contained, and recollected a well-known proverb, "The more Moors, the more spoil." Those who were inclined to prudence, considering the populousness of which they beheld so many signs, thought it was a temptation of Providence for such a handful of men to enter so mighty a kingdom.

At the place where Cortes rested after his descent, he found messengers from Montezuma, who sought to dissuade him, by the pretended difficulties of the way, from entering further into the great King's territories. They also offered bribes.² The resolute Cortes replied

¹ "The next day I ascended the pass between the two mountains, and in descending it we had sight, about two leagues distant, of the province of Chalco which is in the territory of the said Mutezuma."—*Carta de Relacion de D. FERNANDO CORTES. LORENZANA, Hist. de Nueva-Espana*, p. 72.

[The road he followed was scouted and surveyed by Diego Ordaz, who said that the Spaniards could pass along it in safety.]

² "They would agree to give me every year a certain sum" (*certainum quid*).—LORENZANA, p. 73.

[For Cortes himself four loads of gold and one load for each of his

with courtesy; alleged his duty to the King of Spain to proceed; and passed on.

There is a tale, which comes from Mexican sources, that Montezuma bethought him now of staying the advance of the Spaniards by means of his wizards and his necromancers. He sent a number of them forth, that by their incantations and their wizardries they might enchant his enemies to their destruction. It may readily be conjectured that these wise men were too careful of their lives to adventure within the Spanish camp, but the story they told was, that they met a man in the way, "he seemed like an Indian of Chalco; he seemed like one that is drunk"; and that this man threatened and scorned them. "What does Montezuma intend to do?" he exclaimed. "Is it now he is bethinking himself of awakening; is it now he is beginning to fear? But already there is no remedy for him; for he has caused many deaths unjustly. He has committed many injuries, treacheries, and follies." Then the soothsayers and enchanters were much afraid, and made a mound of earth as an altar for this man. But he would not sit upon it, and his wrath was only greater, and he spoke again, saying, "He would never more make account of Mexico, nor have charge of that people, nor assist them. And when the soothsayers would have answered him, they could not do so (*lit.*, there was a knot in their throats)."

Having uttered these things, and other threats pointing to the destruction of Mexico, the seeming Chalcan vanished from their sight. Then the soothsayers perceived that they had been talking with the god Tezcatlipuk; and they returned to the presence of Montezuma, and related what had happened to them. And when he heard it, the King was very sad and crest-fallen (*cabizbajo*), and for a time said not a word. At last, he broke out into lamentations over Mexico, deploring the fate of their old men and their old women, of their youths and of their maidens, ending a doleful discourse by words which contain the philosophy of despair:—"We

officers and men, that is to say at least £1,000,000 a year. So says Mr. H. H. Bancroft, but authority is not given.]

214 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

are born: let that come which should come." And thus these soothsayers and necromancers, who had no doubt been an oppressive institution upon the Mexican kingdom, were of no avail in time of danger, unless to utter unpleasant and reproachful things, which utterances are nearly sure to be made in the days of adversity, without the aid of soothsaying or necromancy.¹

The next place that Cortes reached was Amaquemeca; and staying there for the night, he was well received, and found officers of Montezuma, who had been sent to see that the Spanish army was adequately provided for.

At Iztapalatzinco, on the border of the Lake of Chalco, where Cortes rested on the following day, an embassy, headed by the King of Tezcucó, Montezuma's nephew, made a last effort to detain the adventurous Spaniard. But neither the excuses which they made, nor the threats which they held out, sufficed to delay the march of Cortes for a single hour.

As these ambassadors returned to Mexico, Cortes followed in their rear, passing through an exquisite little town, "with well-built houses and towers" rising out of the water, named Cuitlahuac, situated in the centre of a causeway that divided the Lake of Chalco. After being sumptuously regaled at Cuitlahuac, Cortes set off for Iztapalapa, a little town belonging to Cuitlahuatzin, a brother of Montezuma.² It was in this day's journey, and when they had reached the broad causeway that forms the beginning of the highway from that town to Mexico, that the full beauty of the city and its magnificent environs burst upon their sight. I have said before, that a troop of men hastening to make their fortunes, are not easily allured by natural scenery. But here was a scene at which the most disciplined soldier would not wait for the word of command to halt, but would stop short of his

¹ This story is to be found, more fully narrated, in the *Historia Universal de las cosas de Nueva-España* of BERNARDINO DE SAHAGUN, lib. 12, cap. 13, KINGSBOROUGH'S *Collection*.

² Iztapalapa is derived from *Yxtatl*, the Mexican word for salt. "Yxtapalapa, that is to say the villages where Salt, or Yxtatl, is gathered, and at this day the people of Yxtapalapa have the same occupation."—LORENZANA, p. 56—note.

own accord, as if he had suddenly come into some realm of enchantment. Bernal Diaz exclaims, "And when we saw from thence so many cities and towns rising up from the water, and other populous places situated on the tierra-firme, and that causeway, straight as a level, which went into Mexico, we remained astonished, and said to one another that it appeared like the enchanted castles which they tell of in the book of Amadis, by reason of the great towers, temples, and edifices which there were in the water, and all of them work of masonry. Some, even, of our soldiers asked, if this that they saw was not a thing in a dream."¹ The beauty of the sight seems to have had an exhilarating effect, for there is not a word said of the danger which these enchanted towers and palaces might portend. Their General, however, had been very wary throughout his route from Cholula, and an historian remarks of his conduct during this journey, that his vigilance was always beyond his thoughts,² by which is meant that his caution in action exceeded even his apprehensiveness in thought.

At Iztapalapa Cortes rested for a night, previously to entering Mexico. In recounting any other journey, the traveller, or even the historian, would pause to relate the beauties and the delights of Iztapalapa. The common soldier, Bernal Diaz, says that he was never tired of beholding the diversity of trees, the raised terraces, the flower gardens traversed by large canoes, and adorned with beautiful frescoes.³

The next day Cortes entered Mexico.⁴

Who shall describe Mexico—the Mexico of that age? It ought to be one who had seen all the wonders of the world; and he should have for an audience those who

¹ BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 87.

² OVIEDO, *Hist. Gen. y Nat.*, lib. 33, cap. 5.

³ "I could not sufficiently behold the varieties of trees which gave forth sweet odours, the paths full of roses and flowers, and the many rose-bushes and fruit-trees. There was also a basin of sweet water, and it was a thing worth seeing that large canoes could enter the basin in the garden from the canal without any check, by a canal that had been made of stones of various colours decorated with numerous figures."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 87.

⁴ [On 8th November 1519.]

216 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

had dwelt in Venice and Constantinople, who had looked down upon Granada from the Alhambra, and who had studied all that remains to be seen of the hundred-gated Thebes, of Babylon, and of Nineveh.

The especial attributes of the most beautiful cities in the world were here conjoined; and that which was the sole boast of many a world-renowned name formed but one of the charms of this enchantress among cities. Well might the rude Spanish soldier find no parallel but in the imaginations of his favourite Romance.¹ Like Granada, encircled, but not frowned upon, by mountains; fondled and adorned by water, like Venice; as grand in its buildings as Babylon of old; and rich with gardens, like Damascus;—the great city of Mexico was at that time the fairest in the world, and has never since been equalled. Like some rare woman, of choicest parentage, the descendant of two royal houses far apart, who joins the soft, subtle, graceful beauty of the South, to the fair, blue-eyed, blushing beauty of the North, and sits enthroned in the hearts of all beholders,—so sat Mexico upon the waters, with a diadem of gleaming towers, a fair expanse of flowery meadows on her breast, a circle of mountains as her zone: and, not unwomanlike, rejoicing in the reflection of her beautiful self from the innumerable mirrors which were framed by her streets, her courts, her palaces, and her temples.

Neither was hers a beauty, like that of many cities, which gratifies the eye at a distance; but which diminishes at each advancing step of the beholder, until it absolutely degenerates into squalidity. She was beautiful when seen from afar; she still maintained her beauty, when narrowly examined by the impartial and scrupulous traveller. She was the city not only of a great king, but of an industrious and thriving people.

If we descend into details, we shall see that the above description is not fanciful nor exaggerated. Mexico was situated in a great salt lake, communicating with a freshwater lake. It was approached by three principal causeways of great breadth, constructed of solid masonry, which,

¹ *Amadis de Gaul.*

to use the picturesque language of the Spaniards, were two lances in breadth. The length of one of these causeways was two leagues, and that of another a league and a half; and these two ample causeways united in the middle of the city, where stood the great temple. At the ends of these causeways were 'wooden draw-bridges, so that communication could be cut off between the causeways and the town, which would thus become a citadel. There was also an aqueduct which communicated with the main-land, consisting of two separate lines of work in masonry, in order that if one should need repair, the supply of water for the city might not be interrupted.

The streets were the most various in construction that have ever been seen in any city in the world. Some were of dry land, others wholly of water; and others, again, had pathways of pavement, while in the centre there was room for boats.¹ The foot-passengers could talk with those in the boats.² It may be noticed that a city so constructed requires a circumspect and polite population.

Palaces are commonplace things to describe; but the abodes of the Mexican kings were not like the petty palaces of Northern princes. One of the most observant of those Spaniards, who first saw these wonders, speaks of a palace of Montezuma's in which there was a room where three thousand persons could be well accommodated, and on the terrace-like roof of which a splendid tournament might have been given.³

¹ "The others were bordered half-way with a compressed clayey earth which gave the effect of brick; the other half was full of water, so that the people could move on dry land or on the water in their boats."—*Relation sur la Nouvelle-Espagne*, chap. 17. TERNAUX-COMPANS, *Voyages*. (*Relazione d'alcune cose della Nuova Spagna e della gran città di Temistitan Messico*. Fatta per un gentil'huomo del Signor Fernando Cortese. RAMUSIO, tom 3.)

² The boats that plied in and about Mexico were estimated at fifty thousand in number.

³ "There was to be seen in one of these residences a hall large enough to hold 3000 persons without inconvenience. This palace was so vast that on the terrace covering it a joust could have been held and thirty horsemen could have performed as easily as in the open space of a town."—*Relation sur la Nouvelle-Espagne*, chap. 20. TERNAUX-COMPANS, *Voyages*.

218 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

There was a market-place twice as large as that of the city of Salamanca, surrounded with porticoes, in which there was room for fifty thousand people to buy and sell.

The great temple of the city maintained its due proportion of magnificence. In the plan of the city of Mexico, which is to be found in a very early edition of the Letters of Cortes, published at Nuremberg,¹ and which is supposed to be the one that Cortes sent to Charles the Fifth, I observe that the space allotted to the temple is twenty times as great as that allotted to the market-place. Indeed, the sacred enclosure was in itself a town; and Cortes, who seldom stops, in his terrible narrative, to indulge in praise or in needless description, says that no human tongue could explain the grandeur and the peculiarities of this temple.² Cortes uses the word "temple," but it might rather be called a sacred city, as it contained many temples, and the abodes of all the priests and virgins who ministered at them, also a university, and an arsenal. It was enclosed by lofty stone walls, and was entered by four portals, surmounted by fortresses. No less than twenty³ truncated pyramids, probably cased with porphyry, rose up from within that enclosure. High over them all towered the great temple dedicated to the god of war. This, like the rest, was a truncated pyramid, with ledges round it, and with two small towers upon the highest surface, in which were placed the images of the great god of war (Huitzilopochtli) and of the principal deity of all (Tezcatlipuk), the Mexican Jupiter. It is sad to own that an entrance into these fair-seeming buildings would have gone far to dissipate the admiration which a traveller—if we may imagine one preceding Cortes—would, up to this

¹ See STEVENS'S *American Bibliographer*, under the head of "Cortes." A facsimile of the plan is inserted in that valuable work, from which the one given in this book is taken. It has also been compared with the original in the British Museum.

² "Among these temples there is one, the principal one, whose grandeur and details no human tongue can describe; it is so large that within its circuit of lofty wall there is room for a town of five hundred households."—LORENZANA, p. 105.

³ CORTES says forty; but I prefer abiding by the words of "the ANONYMOUS CONQUEROR."

moment, have felt for Mexico. The temples and palaces, the polished, glistening towers, the aviaries, the terraces, the gardens on the house-tops (many-coloured, for they were not like those at Damascus, where only the rose and the jasmine are to be seen); in a word, the bright, lively and lovely city would have been forgotten in the vast disgust that would have filled the mind of the beholder, when he saw the foul, blood-besmeared idols, with the palpitating hearts of that day's victims lying before them, and the black-clothed, filthy, unkempt priests ministering to these hideous compositions of paste and human blood.¹ "Let the stern Cortes enter," is the cry which the amazed spectator would have uttered, when he saw these horrors, and thought of the armed men who were coming to destroy them. And yet this conjunction, which was to be met with at Mexico, of beauty and horror, is no new thing, and something very like it may be discovered in other guise throughout the world! Civilization side by side with the uttermost horrors! Such is the contrast to be found in the present age too; and such, perhaps, in each of ourselves. And so, with some feeling of pity, even for a nation of cruel and bloodthirsty idolaters, we may contemplate the arrival of the Avenger as he makes his entry into Mexico.

Lest the reader should think that the historian is too studiously apologetic for the Mexican barbarities, let him imagine, for a moment, that Christianity had arisen in the New instead of the Old World; that some Peruvian Columbus had led the way, from West to East, across the Atlantic; and that American missionaries had come to Rome, in the first century of the Christian era. Honoured by the Emperor as ambassadors from some "barbarian" power, and taken in his suite to the Coliseum, with what intense disgust and consternation would these pious men have regarded all that they saw there. They would have seen men torn in pieces by wild beasts, not for anything so respectable as superstition, but simply to indulge a vile morbid love of

¹ "They were composed of a mixture of all the herbs they used for food, coated with human blood."—*Relation sur la Nouvelle-Espagne*, ch. 12. TERNAUX-COMPANS, *Voyages*.

220 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

amusement, to gratify the meanest vanity, and to attain the basest popularity. "These spectators are indeed savages," they would have exclaimed: "and behold, there are women, too, amongst them! No longer beautiful, in our eyes, are the golden palaces, the marble colonnades, and the countless images, admirably sculptured, which we find amongst these barbarous Roman people. Let us hasten to convert them."

But the Old World has always been proud of its Rome, and spoken of its Romans as the masters of civilization.

CHAPTER IV

INTERVIEWS BETWEEN CORTES AND MONTEZUMA—CORTES VISITS THE GREAT TEMPLE—THE MEXICAN IDOLATRY

THE route by which Cortes entered Mexico was along the great causeway which led from Iztapalapa.¹ As he approached the city, he was met by a thousand Mexican nobles richly clad, who, after the fashion of their country, saluted him by laying their hands in the dust, and then kissing them. This ceremony, as it was performed by each one separately, occupied more than an hour. Cortes then passed over the drawbridge which led into the city, and was received there by Montezuma. He had been borne from the city in a rich litter, but when he approached the bridge, he descended to receive Cortes, being supported on the arms of his brother and his nephew, the Kings of Tezcuco and Iztapalapa. A gorgeous pall, of which the ground-work was either green feathers, or made to represent green feathers, was exquisitely adorned with pendant embroidery of gold, silver, pearls, and precious stones. This pall, or canopy, was held over him by four great lords. He wore a mantle rich with gold and precious stones; on his head a mitred diadem of gold, and on his feet golden sandals, richly embossed, "after the manner of the ancients."² The subordinate Kings were bare-footed, though dressed in other respects as magnificently as Montezuma. The Spanish General descended from his horse and would have embraced the Mexican Monarch. But this gesture did not accord with the notions of reverence entertained by the Mexicans for their

¹ [The causeway by which the Spaniards entered is still in use as a road. The lake is now much smaller, being largely marsh.]

² GOMARA, *Crónica de la Nueva-España*, cap. 65. BARCIA, *Historiadores*, tom. 2.

kings; and Cortes was prevented from executing this friendly but familiar intention of his. They interchanged presents, however, Cortes throwing upon Montezuma's neck a collar made (somewhat significantly) of false pearls and diamonds; while Montezuma, as they went further on, gave the Spanish General two collars made of shells which the Mexicans valued much, each collar being adorned with eight golden pendants in the form of craw-fish, admirably wrought. The procession then moved on with all due pomp into the town, for the stately Spaniard was the man of the Old World who understood pomp nearly as well as any of these despots of the New World. The eyes of the beholders, familiar with the aspect of gold and jewels, were doubtless fixed upon the wondrous animals that came foaming and caracolling along. Behind them all rode Death, but no one saw him.

Mexico, being such a city as I have described, was pre-eminently adapted for the display of a great concourse of human beings. By land and by water, on the towers, on the temples, at all heights of those truncated pyramids, were clustered human beings to gaze upon the strangers. The crowds that came to see the Spaniards made the spectacle very grand, but did not add to their sense of security. Indeed, as they marched along this narrow causeway, intersected by various bridges, of which they well knew the use that might be made in war, they must have felt, as one of them owns he did feel, considerable apprehension. The wary counsel that had been given to them by the Tlascalans and the other enemies of Montezuma, was sure on this occasion to be present to the minds of some of them; but, no doubt, they all marched on with soldierly composure to the quarters which Montezuma had prepared for them. These were in the palace of his father, a previous sovereign of Mexico. Having conducted the Spaniards thither, he left them to refresh themselves, after the fatigues of their journey.

The memorable day on which Cortes and his companions entered Mexico was the 8th of November 1519. Their

number was about four hundred and fifty men. In a time of extraordinary festivity, they would have formed but a poor and mean sacrifice to have been offered to the Mexican gods. On the other hand, the very least number at which the population of Mexico can be estimated is three hundred thousand, and I conceive it to have been much larger.¹

The course of history amongst people, who have the same general ideas, the same religion, and who are not far removed from each other in civilization, is apt to be somewhat monotonous, and sadly to perplex the memories of children and other unfortunate persons, who have to give an account of what they read. But when the men of one hemisphere meet the men of another, after having been separated for unknown centuries, the simplest affair between them is in the highest degree curious; and the difficulties of the narrative, the strangeness of the names

¹ "Torquemada affirms, that the population of the capital amounted to one hundred and twenty thousand houses; but the Anonymous Conqueror, Gomara, Herrera, and other historians, agree in the number of sixty thousand houses, not that of sixty thousand inhabitants, as Robertson says; for no ancient author computed them so few in number. It is true that in the Italian translation of the relation of the Anonymous Conqueror we read *sessante mila abitanti*; but this has been, without doubt, a mistake of the translator, who having, perhaps, found in the original *sesenta mil vecinos*, translated it sixty thousand *abitanti*, when he ought to have said *fuochi*; because, otherwise, Cholula, Xochimilco, Iztapalapa, and other such cities, would be made greater than Mexico. But in the above-mentioned number the suburbs are not included. It appears that Torquemada included the suburbs, but still his calculation appears excessive."—CLAVIGERO, *History of Mexico*, English translation, book 9, p. 72—note.

This error of reckoning the heads of families as the whole population requires to be much guarded against in early American history. Even M. Humboldt is said to have fallen into it. See *Antigüedades Peruanas*, p. 65. It is certain that *vecinos* does not in this instance mean individual neighbours, but the heads of neighbouring families. We often use the word "neighbour" in the same sense.

[Mr. Fiske thinks that it means 60,000 inhabitants. He and others hold that Mexico was an ordinary Indian *pueblo* town of some three hundred huge communal houses each containing a clan of many families. This would explain the Spanish description of the great size of the houses they called palaces, and the native custom of fighting from the roofs. Mr. Morgan, another high authority, would reduce the population of Mexico to 30,000.]

(which, however, might not be so inharmonious if we knew how to pronounce them), and whatever else may be repulsive in the story, are all overcome by the originality of the transactions. In this case, Cortes, who may very fitly represent the European commander of that age, both in his valour, his policy, and his devoutness, meets the greatest monarch of the state most advanced in civilization of the Western world; and, if we could but trust to interpreters, what an insight we should have into the history of this strange and eventful conquest.

But alas! those who know how difficult a thing it is to render one European language into another, may well feel bewildered, when they have to give an account of what passed through the mouths of interpreters in languages where frequently there were no cognate ideas. Moreover, supposing the respective translations freed from mere difficulties of language, they still were likely to be varied largely by the passions and the interests of the bystanders, and then to be coloured according to the personages for whom the reports of these conversations were prepared. It is necessary to bear all these difficulties in mind when considering the transactions which are now to be narrated, and the evidence upon which they rest.

After the Spaniards had dined in the palace set apart for them, Montezuma returned, and had a formal conference with Cortes. The account which the Spanish Commander gives to his Sovereign of this conference is, that Montezuma commenced by saying, that he and his subjects were descended from strangers who had come from afar into this country.¹ He added that their leader had returned to his own country, and that when he came again to seek his people, they declined to accompany him back, and that finally he returned alone. The Mexican nation, however, had always supposed that the descendants of this great leader would come again, and subdue the earth; that it was probable that the great personage of

¹ Observe, from PETER MARTYR's account of the speech, how a statement of this kind grows:—"Before living memory a certain great prince brought our ancestors, *transported in ships*, to these regions."—Dec. 5, cap. 3.

whom Cortes had spoken¹ (Charles the Fifth) was a descendant of the first leader of the Mexicans to that country, and, consequently, their natural Lord; that he, therefore, and his people held Cortes for Lord in the place of his master, and placed all that they had at his disposal.

So far the report of the speech of Montezuma seems likely to be false, or, at least, greatly overstrained. Montezuma may have sought to claim kindred with these wondrous and valorous strangers. He may have alluded to prophecies about their coming—and the concurrence of testimony on this point is very remarkable. But that he placed himself and his kingdom in this unreserved manner, in open court, as it were, at the feet of Cortes in their first interview, is in the highest degree unlikely; and we cannot but regret to find the authority for this conversation, not only in the history subsequently drawn up by the Chaplain of Cortes, but in the letter of Cortes himself to the Emperor. What follows is probable and credible. Montezuma went on to say that he well knew that Cortes had heard from the Tlascalans and others many calumnies about him, and many exaggerations, such as that the walls of his palaces were made of gold, and that he was a god; “whereas you see,” he said, “my palaces are made of stone, lime, and earth, and my flesh is like yours.” He then assured them that they should be provided with all necessary things, and be under no care, just as if they were still in their own country and their own homes.

The next day Cortes paid a visit to Montezuma. This time the conversation was not political but religious; and Cortes, insincere, crafty, and reserved, in mundane matters, seems to have compensated for all this, and to have indulged in a sincerity which bordered on rashness, in all that concerned spiritual matters. It may be doubted whether, in the annals of conquest, any conqueror can be found (except perhaps some Mohammedan one) who was more deeply imbued with the missionary spirit than was Cortes.

¹ Not on the present occasion, but before, to Montezuma's ambassadors.

226 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

The Spanish Commander, already not unpractised in expounding the mysteries of the Christian Faith, repeated briefly the story of Christianity; explained to Montezuma why the Spaniards worshipped the cross; condemned and scorned the Mexican idols; and informed Montezuma how these idols had given way before the cross.¹

From the New Testament Cortes passed to the Old Testament, spoke of the Creation, of Adam and Eve, of the universal brotherhood of man, and then said that his King, in the spirit of such brotherhood, grieving over the loss of souls, had sent the Spaniards to prevent the adoration of idols and the sacrifice of men and women. He then held out a hope that certain persons, who were of a much more saintly character than he and his men, would hereafter be sent by the King of Spain to instruct the Mexicans in these sacred things.

Montezuma now indicating a wish to speak, Cortes concluded his discourse, doubtless putting a restraint upon himself for so eloquent a preacher.

It brings the whole scene more vividly before us, and shows, I think, that at least we are right in concluding Religion to have been the chief, if not the only, subject discussed at this interview, that Cortes turned to his men and said, "We will finish with this, as it is the first touch."²

"My Lord Malinché!"³ replied Montezuma, "I have had a perfect understanding of all the discourse and reasonings which you have addressed before now to my vassals upon the subject of your God; and also upon that of the cross; and also respecting all the other matters that you have preached about in the *pueblos* through which you have passed. We have not responded to any of these things, for from the beginning here we have adored our gods and have held them to be good gods; and so, no doubt, are yours: do not take the trouble, at present, to say anything more about them to us.

¹ "That it was evident of what little worth and what evil things they were, since, wherever we had planted the Cross, they durst no longer appear, as his ambassadors themselves saw."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 90.

² BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 90.

³ Malinche, from *Malintzin*, the Lord of Marina; *tzin* being a Mexican title, added to names, and corresponding to the word "Lord."

And, with respect to what you say about the Creation of the World, we, too, are of opinion that it was created a long time ago; and we hold it for certain that you are the persons of whom our ancestors spoke to us, who would come from where the Sun rises; and to that great King of yours I am much obliged; and I will give him of that which I may have."¹

The above is part of a speech recorded by Bernal Diaz, and may be taken as an unbiassed account of what that honest soldier, who was present, gathered of the meaning of what passed in this memorable interview. It will be observed how inconsistent it is with the report given by Cortes of what took place on a former occasion. The grand and polite Montezuma might well say that he would give of what he had to this unknown but related foreign potentate; but this is a very different thing from promising vassalage and subjection; and, being yet unconquered, talking like a defeated man and a prisoner.

Montezuma then asked some very natural questions, such as whether Hernandez de Córdova and Grijalva were of the same nation as Cortes, and being answered in the affirmative, went on to say, how happy he was to see the Spaniards at his court. If he had sought to prevent them from coming there, he added, it was not from any wish of his to exclude them, but because his subjects were so frightened at them, saying that they threw thunder and lightning about, that they were savage deities, and follies of that sort. For his part, now that he had seen the Spaniards, his opinion of them was raised. He held them in more esteem than before, and would give them of whatever he possessed.

Cortes and all the Spaniards present responded with fitting courtesies; and then Montezuma smilingly, for he was a humorous man, though a dignified one,² made the same remarks about the calumnies and exaggerations of the Tlascalans which have been quoted before.

Cortes, in his turn smiling, replied with some commonplace remark about men always speaking ill of those

¹ BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 90.

² "Because he was of a merry disposition, though never forgetful of his high station."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 90.

228 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

whom they were opposed to; and then the interview was gracefully ended by gifts of gold and garments, which were brought in and distributed amongst all the Spaniards who were there present.

I think it must be admitted that in this interview¹ the great King of the West comported himself with much discretion and dignity, putting aside politely, and yet respectfully, any discussion upon theological matters, as if he had been a worldly statesman of our own time, always anxious to get rid of these subjects, as knowing how little they tend to the outward peace and physical happiness of mankind.

A well-known writer, and one thoroughly skilled in Mexican affairs, the celebrated Jesuit Acosta, remarks, in reference to the proceedings of this day, or of some other early day after the arrival of Cortes in Mexico, that many persons were of opinion that the Spaniards might have made anything they pleased of Montezuma and his people, and have introduced the gospel without bloodshed. "But," as he adds, "the judgments of God are high, and the faults on both sides were many, and so the thing turned out very differently."²

This opinion may be well-founded; but, on the other hand, it must be remarked that the Mexicans were not in a similar state to those Indians amongst whom the most remarkable conversions have been made by peaceful means. An established priesthood, with large revenues, pompous buildings, and a carefully regulated ritual, formed an element in the Mexican Empire which would render it much less convertible to Christianity than were the comparatively primitive people of Copan and Paraguay, or the wandering tribes in Florida. Amongst these latter is to be found the most remark-

¹ It is curious that Cortes does not say anything of this conference in his letter to Charles the Fifth: the reason for such an omission may be because he had received no such commission as he claimed, and therefore did not like to make such a statement to the Emperor.

² "It is the opinion of many that if things had been carried on as they were that day, they could with ease have done what they pleased with the King and his kingdom, and have introduced Christianity peacefully and happily. But the judgments," etc.—ACOSTA, *Hist. Nat. y Moral de las Indias*, lib. 7, cap. 25.

able instance of conversion, or rather of opportunity for conversion, that, I think, ever was recorded. It is to be met with in the narrative of Cabeça de Vaca. He and his companions, shipwrecked, naked, and for a long time treated as slaves, acquired, probably through their medical knowledge, or greater discernment in things in general, an influence, as of gods, over the natives of Florida. The remarkable point of the narrative is, that they were not held in this high consideration by one tribe only, but by all they came amongst; and that they were borne in triumph from one tribe to another, all men's goods in the tribe at whose grounds they arrived being brought out before them, and, to the great vexation of the Christians, divided amongst their followers, who consisted of the preceding tribe.¹ The whole of this narrative seems to throw some light upon the extraordinary stories which pervade the Indian traditions in America of men of higher cultivation than themselves who come and give them laws and manners, and then vanish away, promising to return again.

Such transactions, however, were only possible amongst a primitive people, and were not to be expected to take place amongst the Mexicans, though much, doubtless, might have been done to introduce Christianity gradually amongst them.

These speculations are a very fit introduction to the next public proceeding of Cortes, which was to ask for leave to see the great temple, dedicated to the Mexican god of war. This request Montezuma granted with apparent pleasure. But, for fear lest the Spaniards should do any dishonour to his gods, as they had done in the provinces, he resolved to go himself to the temple ;

¹ "The robbers, to console them, told them that we were children of the Sun, with power to heal the sick and to kill them, and other lies still greater, such as they very well knew how to invent when it suited them. They impressed on them that they should treat us with much respect and be careful not to injure us in any way ; and that, giving us all that they had, they should take us where there were more people, and that when we arrived there, they should rob those among whom they came, and take what they had, because that was the custom."—*Naufragios de ALVAR NUÑEZ CABEÇA DE VACA, en la Florida*, cap. 28, tom. 1. BARCIA, *Historiadores*.

230 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

and accordingly he repaired thither with his accustomed pomp. On their way, the Spaniards visited the great market-place, which perhaps was the best means of learning, in a short time, the skill and riches of the people by whom they were surrounded.

In this vast area each kind of merchandize had its own quarter, and it would be difficult to specify any kind which was not to be seen there. To begin with the noblest and the most shameful merchandize, namely, that of human beings, there were as many to be found as "the negroes whom the Portuguese bring from Guinea."¹ Then, every kind of eatable, every form of dress, medicines, perfumes, unguents, furniture, fruit, wrought gold and silver, lead, tin, brass, and copper, adorned the porticoes and allured the passer-by. Paper, that great material of civilization, was to be obtained in this wonderful emporium; also every kind of earthenware, salt, wood, tobacco, razors made of obsidian,² dressed and undressed skins, cotton of all colours in skeins, painters' colours, building materials, and manure; wine, honey, wax, charcoal, and little dogs. Convenience was well considered; porters were to be hired,³ and refreshments to be obtained. One curious thing, which Cortes noticed, was, that every commodity was sold by number or by measure, and not by weight.

With regard to the regulations under which this vast bazaar was held, it may be noticed that the Mexicans had arrived at that point of civilization, where fraud is frequent in the sale of goods; but, superior even to ourselves in this day, they had a counterpoise to this

¹ "The slave market for slaves of both sexes was on as great a scale as the Portuguese market for negro slaves of Guinea. To prevent them from running away, they were bound in line by collars round the neck, although some were left free to walk."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 92.

² "Obsidian, jade, and Lydian-stone, are three minerals, which nations ignorant of the use of copper or iron, have in all ages employed for making keen-edged weapons. . . . This variety of lava" (obsidian) "was employed as an object of ornament: and the inhabitants of Quito made beautiful looking-glasses with an obsidian divided into parallel laminæ."—HUMBOLDT'S *Personal Narrative*, i, chap. 2.

³ "There are also men like those called porters in Castille to carry burdens."—LORENZANA, p. 103.

in a body of officers called judges,¹ who sat in a court-house on the spot, and before whom all causes and matters relating to the market were tried, and who commanded the delinquents to be punished. There were also officers who went continually about the market-place, watching what was sold, and the measures which were used. When they found a false one, they broke it. This market was so much frequented, that the busy hum of all the buying and selling might be heard for a league off. Amongst the Spaniards there were soldiers who had served in Italy and in the East; and they said, that a market-place so skilfully laid out, so large, so well managed, and so full of people, they had never seen. In considering the list of commodities which were to be sold there, and which may serve to make life tolerable, I note only three deficiencies—bills of exchange, newspapers, and books; but any one of these things indicates a civilization of a higher order than the Mexican, and was reserved for some of the steadiest and subtlest thinkers² of the great races of the world.

From the market-place the Spaniards moved on towards the temple, or to what, as before noticed, might have been justly called the sacred city, for even ere they reached the great enclosure, they came upon courts and enclosures, which, doubtless, were the precincts of the temple, and must have been in some way connected with its ministrations. At last they reached the polished surface of the great court, where not even a straw or any particle of dirt was suffered to remain. Amidst all the temples which adorned this court one stood pre-eminent, where Montezuma himself was worshipping. On seeing Cortes, the King sent six priests and two of his principal nobles to conduct the Spanish Commander up to the summit of the temple. When they came to the steps, which were a hundred and

¹ "In the great square is a very good house, like a court-house, where are always sitting ten or twelve persons as judges, who decide all questions that arise in the market, and punish delinquents. In the same square are other persons, who go continually to and fro among the people, watching what is sold and the measures used in selling, and they have been seen to break false measures."—LORENZANA, p. 104.

² The Italians have, I believe, the best claim to the merit of having invented bills of exchange.

232 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

fourteen in number, the attendant Mexicans wished to take Cortes by the arms, and to assist him in ascending; but he dispensed with their aid, and, accompanied by his men, mounted to the highest platform, where they saw a horrible figure like a serpent, with other hideous figures, and much blood newly spilt. Oh! what a change from the wisdom of the market-place to the sublime folly and foulness of the temple!

At this moment Montezuma came forth from the chamber, or chapel, if we may call it so, where he had been worshipping. Receiving Cortes and his company with much courtesy, he said, "You must be tired, my Lord Malinché, after your ascent to this our great temple." But Cortes replied that "he and his men were never tired by anything."¹

Then the King took Cortes by the hand, and bade him look down upon the great city, and upon the surrounding cities on the border of the lake—those beautiful glistening satellites of the primary and pre-eminent Mexico. Cortes, however, does not tell us anything of the beauties and wonders which were to be seen in this view from the summit of the temple. It is the inherent curse of politic and foreseeing men, that they enjoy, and even recognize, the present so much less than other men do. The common soldiers looked down and gazed in all directions, noticing the temples, the oratories, the little towers, the floating gardens,² and those light and graceful drawbridges, which

¹ BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 92.

² "They plait and twist willows, and roots of marsh plants, or other materials, together, which are light, but capable of supporting the earth of the garden firmly united. Upon this foundation they lay the light bushes that float on the lake, and over all, the mud and dirt which they draw up from the bottom of the same lake. Their regular figure is quadrangular; their length and breadth various; but as far as we can judge, they are about eight perches long, and not more than three in breadth, and have less than a foot in elevation above the surface of the water. These were the first fields which the Mexicans owned after the foundation of Mexico; there they first cultivated the maize, great pepper, and other plants, necessary for their support. In progress of time, as those fields grew numerous (*eccessivamente multiplicati*, orig.) from the industry of those people, there were among them gardens of flowers and odoriferous plants, which were employed in the worship of their gods, and served for the recreation of the nobles. . . . In

were especially to be seen in the surrounding towns. It was then that a murmuring talk arose amongst them about Rome and Constantinople, and all that each man had seen of what was deemed, till this moment, most beautiful in the world. But, as Cortes looked down, what other thoughts were his ! A poet speaks of "the cloudy foreheads of the great." The child and the rustic, in simple envy of those above them, who seem to them all-powerful, little dream of the commanding cares and hungry anxieties which beset the man who has undertaken to play any considerable part in the world. And, if ever there was a man who had undertaken a great part, without rehearsal, it was Cortes. The multitude of people moving to and fro, which enlivened the beautiful prospect in the eyes of the common soldier, afforded matter of most serious concern to the man who had to give orders for the next step in this untrodden wilderness of action. Even the hum of the market-place was no pleasant murmur in his ears, for he could readily translate it into the fierce cries of thousands of indignant warriors.

It is often happy for us that we do not know the thoughts of those who stand by us, or perhaps on this occasion, the lofty politeness of the sovereign and the warrior might have changed into an instant death-struggle as to which of them should be hurled down first from that platform, and complete the sacrifice of that eventful day.

Cortes, in whom Policy then only slumbered when Religion spoke to him, said to Father de Olmedo, "It appears to me, that we might just make a trial of Montezuma, if he would let us set up our church here ?"¹ The wiser priest replied, that it would be very well to make that request if there were any likelihood of its being successful, but that the present did not appear to him the time for making it, nor did he see in Montezuma the humour to grant it. Upon this Cortes abandoned the idea, and merely asked the King to allow the Spaniards to see

the largest gardens there is commonly a little tree, and even a little hut to shelter the cultivator, and defend him from rain, or the sun. That part of the lake where those floating gardens are, is a place of infinite recreation, where the senses receive the highest possible gratification."—CLAVIGERO, *History of Mexico*, book 7, p. 375. See also TORQUEMADA, lib. 13, cap. 32.

¹ BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 92.

234 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

his gods. To this Montezuma, after having consulted his priests, consented; and the Spaniards entered those dread abodes of idolatry.

There is a family likeness in all idols; and, when the Spaniards had advanced within the little tower where the hall of the "god of war" was, they found two hideous creatures seated on an altar and under a canopy, large and bulky figures, the one representing Huitzilopochtli and the other Tezcatlipuk. The god of war had a broad face, wide mouth, and terrible eyes. He was covered with gold, pearls, and precious stones; and was girt about with golden serpents. In one hand he held a bow, in the other arrows. A little idol, his page, stood by him, holding a lance and a golden shield. On Huitzilopochtli's neck, a fitting ornament, were the faces of men wrought in silver, and their hearts in gold. Close by were braziers with incense, and on the braziers three real hearts of men who had that day been sacrificed.

All around, the walls were black with clotted blood.¹

On the left hand of the god of war was Tezcatlipuk, with a countenance like that of a bear, and with mirrors for eyes. A string of little demons encircled his waist. Five human hearts, of men that day sacrificed, were burning before this idol.

A third false deity, the "deity of increase," made half woman,² half crocodile, gilded and jewelled like the rest, was to be seen, not in the same room with Huitzilopochtli and Tezcatlipuk, but, as it were, enriched above, in a recess that was formed in the highest part of the tower.

In this recess, too, the walls and the altar on which the idol

¹ Mere literary men and antiquarians have blamed the efforts of those who sought to efface the memory even of these accursed idolatries from the minds of the Indians. We cannot wonder, however, at any sacrifice of books, pictures, or even buildings, for that great end.

[It might have been possible, however, to extinguish the idolatry and leave the literature. The historian finds it difficult to forgive the missionary efforts of such a one as that bishop of Merida—Landa—who destroyed upwards of 5000 monuments and 224 MSS. relating to Yucatan. He then sat down to write a history of the country, and his plan illustrates the primitive historical methods of many of the early Spanish writers. See also p. 267, note.]

² BERNAL DIAZ says "half man," but I think the deity must have been Centeotl, the Mexican Ceres, the goddess of *centli* (maize).

stood were covered with blood. The smell of the great hall had been like that of some slaughter-house; but in the recess, the crowning horror of this accursed place, the detestable odour was so overpowering, that the only thought of the Spaniards who had ascended into this part of the building was how most quickly to get out of it.¹ Here was a great drum made of serpents' skins, which, when struck, gave forth a melancholy hideous sound; and here were instruments of sacrifice, and many hearts of men.

It might be prudent, or it might not be prudent, but Cortes must give some utterance to his feelings; and we may well wonder at the reserve with which he spoke, rather than at his being able to refrain no longer. With a smile he said, "I do not know, my Lord Montezuma, how so great a King and so learned a man as you are, can have avoided to perceive (literally, should not have collected in your thoughts) that these idols of yours are not gods, but evil things which are called 'devils'; and that you and all your priests may be satisfied of this, do me the favour not to take it ill that we should put in the lofty recess of this tower a cross, and then in the hall where your deities Huitzilopochtli and Tezcatlipuk are we will make a compartment where we may put an image of Our Lady (this Montezuma had already seen), and you will behold the fear which those idols that keep you in delusion have of it."

But Montezuma and his priests were troubled and grieved at these words, and the King said, "My Lord Malinché, if you believe that it is your business to say such dishonourable things as you have said of my gods, I will not show them to you. We hold them for very good gods, and they give us health and rain, harvests and fine weather, victories and whatever we desire: it is our business to adore them, and to sacrifice unto them. I must request of you that no more words be uttered to their dishonour." To this speech, and to the alteration of aspect in the King, which Cortes noticed with the swift appreciation of a courtier, the Spaniard with an apparently gay countenance replied, "It is time that Your Highness and we should go."

To this Montezuma answered that it was well, but that

¹ "The stench was so great that we scarcely knew how soon to get away."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 92.

236 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

for his part he must stay behind, to pray and make sacrifice for the sin he had committed in permitting the Spaniards to ascend the great temple, and for his having been the cause of injurious words having been uttered against his gods. Upon this, Cortes, with all due courtesy, took leave; and the Spaniards, descending with difficulty the deep steps of the temple, marched back to their quarters, sickened, saddened, and somewhat enlightened as to the nature of the men by whom they were surrounded.

Coming into the light of day, hearing the busy tumult of the market-place and the merry noise of children playing in the sun; then catching bright glimpses of the water, and looking at the unnumbered boats which plied along the streets; all that they had seen in the dark and dismal charnel-houses of Huitzilopochtli and Tezcatlipuk must have seemed to the Spaniards an ill-omened dream. Years would pass away, and they would become veterans, covered with wounds and with renown, before they would have time to think over and to realise to themselves the full horror of the accursed things which they had looked upon that day.

Living in a Christian country and with every means of enlightenment, we feel it difficult to comprehend how so much civilization, or what looks very like it, could be found in company with barbarous human sacrifices; but this apparent anomaly is soon explained, when we come to look into some of the prime causes of movement in the human soul. In justice to the Mexicans, we should consider what can be said for them. An historian should know no hate; and we of this age must not share the blind sentiments of horror which occupied the minds of the conquering Spaniards, and served to justify their proceedings.

When we reflect upon the untoward, disastrous, and ridiculous aspect of human life—how, for instance, little things done or neglected at an immature period have so fatal an influence throughout a life-time,—when we behold the successful iniquity, the immense injustice, and the singular infelicity, which often beset the most innocent of men—nay, further, when we see the spitefulness of

nature—for so it seems unless profoundly understood,—when we consider the great questions of human life, such as free will and the origin of evil, which are not explained now, but only agreed to be postponed in humble hopefulness, and which, in the earlier periods of the world's history, exercised to the full their malign discouragement,—we cannot wonder at the belief in evil deities of great power and supremacy. And, then, what more natural than to clothe such deities with the worst attributes of bad men, and to suppose that they must be approached with servility, and appeased by suffering. Then, further, what more natural than to offer to such gods of the best upon earth, namely, our fellow-men.

It must not be forgotten that there was often a friendly feeling towards the persons sacrificed, and in some cases they were looked upon as messengers to the gods, and charged with distinct messages.

The idea of human sacrifice, as pleasing to the gods, being once adopted in moments of victory, doubt, or humiliation, is soon developed. The evil practice becomes a system, and partakes of the strength of all systems, taking root amongst the interests, the passions, and the pleasures of mankind; and, thenceforward, he will be a bold man, and, rarer still, a thinker, not given to stop anywhere in thought, who shall lift himself above the moral atmosphere of his nation, and shall say, "This thing which all consent in, and which I have known from my youth upward, is wrong."

Having thus stated something on behalf of the Mexicans, which does not, however, make the indignation of the Spanish soldiers less reasonable or natural, I take up the thread of the history, and return to the little garrison of Cortes in the midst of this splendid city of cruel and polite idolaters.

I must call the attention of the reader to the fact, that a work which, for convenience, is constantly referred to in these pages as *LORENZANA*, is a collection of the letters of Cortes, made by Francisco Antonio Lorenzana, Archbishop of Mexico, and published, with maps and annotations of some value, in 1770. For an account of these

238 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

letters, which, from their length, may more fitly be called despatches, see STEVENS'S *American Bibliographer*. The first despatch is lost: the second contains the occurrences from 16th of July 1519, to 30th of October 1520; the third contains the occurrences from 30th of October 1520, to 15th of May 1522. The second and third despatches are those principally referred to in this part of the history.

[From the references to it, made by Gomara, the first letter was doubtless one sent with de Montejo and de Puertocarrero (*ante*, pp. 195, 196). Some authorities hold that it was intentionally suppressed by the Council of the Indies.]

CHAPTER V

DIFFICULT POSITION OF CORTES—CAPTURE OF MONTEZUMA

THE question as to what Cortes was to do next, was a most difficult one. If we put ourselves, in imagination, into his place, and lay down several plans of action, we shall find great difficulties inherent in any of them. Was he to play the part of an ambassador, and, after observing the nature of the country, and endeavouring to form some league of amity with the monarch, to return to Cuba or to Spain? He would but have returned to a prison or a grave; for the ambassadorial capacity which he assumed was a mere pretext.

Was he to make a settlement in the country? For that purpose he must get safe out of Mexico, return through territories whose gods he had insulted, and whose people he had slaughtered, and taking up a position at his city of Vera Cruz, remain exposed to the revengeful attacks by sea of his employer, the Governor of Cuba.

Was he to be a missionary or a trader? By what unfit men was he surrounded for such enterprizes as these!

His only career was conquest; and, unfortunately, in the rapidity of that conquest lay his chief hope of safety. Now, what is so swift as terror? What could he do in that way, what hostage could he secure, which should paralyze at once the arms of the vigorous multitudes who surrounded him, waiting but a despot's nod to make the endeavour at least to overwhelm these unwelcome strangers?

There was no such hostage but the person of the King himself! True that this Monarch had received Cortes graciously and grandly, and it would be an act of vast perfidiousness thus to requite his hospitality. But policy does not take the virtues, or the affections, into council. This act of treachery seemed the safest thing to be

done, and, therefore, with Cortes, it was the best. I have shown that the destruction of the fleet was not so great a transaction as it has often been represented, and that other people shared in it; but this projected seizure of Montezuma's person belonged to Cortes alone, and whatever greatness there was in it, call it great prudence or call it great iniquity, was his. I am reminded of a maxim, full of wisdom, uttered by a man versed in conspiracy,¹ who said that there are certain positions in affairs, in which it is impossible to make a step which shall not be a wrong one; but that men do not come into those positions without some considerable fault of their own. The fault in the position of Cortes was an incurable one, namely, the uncertainty of support from the mother-country, but it was a fault occasioned by his original misconduct to his employer, Velazquez. In the greatness of the conquest we are apt to forget the poor position of the conqueror, and to speak of him as if he had been a powerful prince, or an authorized general, with all the strength and the responsibility of such a station; whereas he was merely a brilliant adventurer, having lost the authority with which he was originally clothed. It was the misfortune that beset nearly all the Spanish conquests in America, that they were made by men of insufficient power and authority for such transactions. Another Alexander was required to conquer another India. Had there been a powerful European prince for such an undertaking, consolidation might have gone hand-in-hand with conquest; and millions, absolutely millions, of lives might have been saved. But that want of time which is the saddest and most common deficiency for all men in power, the disturbed state of Europe at this period, and the inability to recognize what is most requisite to be done, which belongs to each successive generation, prevented the conquest of America from taking anything like its highest form, and threw it into the hands of men who lacked the authority to maintain themselves in the position which they had assumed.

The reader, who probably knows the outline of the

¹ CARDINAL DE RETZ.

story of Cortes, may be surprised at his career being considered otherwise than most successful. On the contrary, however, I venture to think that a conquest is most dearly purchased which is accompanied by large destruction of the conquered people.

Having made an apology for the resolve of Cortes, which he would probably have thought very needless, we may proceed to consider its execution. The deed, once resolved upon, was sure to be swiftly accomplished. That miserable interval between resolve and execution, which is the torment and the ruin of weak men, was a thing not known in the career of Cortes. He had not been one week in Mexico, before he resolved to seize the person of Montezuma, had chosen his pretext for doing it, and had arranged his plans. The plea that he made use of was a skirmish (into the details of which we need not enter) between Juan de Escalante, who had been left in command at Villa Rica, and the people of a neighbouring town called by the Spaniards Almeria, in which skirmish Escalante and six Spaniards had fallen. That this affair was only important as it furnished a pretext, may be seen from the account which Cortes gives of the transaction to Charles the Fifth, in which he states that from some things which he had seen since his entry into Mexico, and also from what he had observed on his journey, it appeared to him, "that it was convenient for the royal service, and for the security of the Spaniards under his command, that Montezuma should be in his power, and should not have complete liberty." Cortes adds, that he feared lest there should have been an unfavourable change in the Mexican Monarch's conduct towards the Spaniards, "especially as we Spaniards are somewhat difficult to live with and troublesome, and if Montezuma should have taken offence, he was powerful enough to do us much harm; so much so, indeed, that we might be utterly destroyed" (literally, *that there might be no memory left of us*).¹ Moreover, Cortes thought that, Montezuma once in his power, all the provinces of the Mexican Empire would easily be brought under the Spanish dominion.

¹ LORENZANA, p. 89.

Cortes communicated to his soldiers his intention of seizing Montezuma; and they, according to Bernal Diaz, passed the night in prayer to the Lord, "that the enterprise might be so conducted as to redound to His holy service."¹ In the morning, careful preparations having been made, Cortes went to the palace, accompanied by five of his principal captains and his two interpreters, Geronimo de Aguilar and Donna Marina. So cautious a general took care to keep up the line of communication between his advanced position and the main body of his forces in the fortress, by stationing parties of his men at the points where four streets met.² When arrived at the palace, Cortes, according to his own account, began by talking playfully to Montezuma, who gave him on that occasion some golden ornaments and one of his daughters. The Spanish General then turned the discourse to the affair of Almeria, and to the loss of the Spaniards under Escalante, in which a certain unfortunate Cacique was concerned, whose name, as corrupted by Spanish pronunciation, was Qualpopoca. Cortes, who, as Bernal Diaz says, "did not care a chestnut about the matter" (*no lo tenia en una castaña*), made it out to be a concern of the most serious nature. He was answerable, he declared, to his King for the Spaniards who had been killed; and Qualpopoca had said that it was by Montezuma's orders he had committed this assault. The Monarch immediately took from his wrist a sort of seal, bearing the effigy of the Mexican god of war, and giving it in charge to some of his attendants, ordered that they should go to the scene of this skirmish between the Spaniards and his people, that they should inquire into the matter, and bring Qualpopoca bound before him.

This was a very prompt procedure, and Cortes thanked the Monarch for it, but said that, until the matter was cleared up, Montezuma must come and live with the Spaniards in their quarters, which, it is almost needless to add, they had taken care to make a strong post of. The Spanish General begged Montezuma not to be

¹ BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 95.

² "Leaving the intersections of the streets well guarded."—LORENZANA, p. 84.

annoyed at this request, saying that he was not to be a prisoner, but was to conduct his government as before, and that he should occupy what apartments he pleased, and, indeed, that he would have the Spaniards in addition to his own attendants, to serve him in whatsoever he should command.

But it may be conjectured that all these soothing words were not even heard by the Mexican Monarch, who sat stupefied by the vast audacity of the demand. Here was a man, into whose eyes other men had not ventured to look, who was accustomed, when rarely he moved from his palace, to see the crowd prostrate themselves before him as he went along, as if he were indeed a god, who never set foot upon the ground;¹ and now, in his own palace, undefeated, not bound, with nothing to prepare him by degrees for such a fearful descent of dignity, he was asked by a few strangers, whom he had sought to gain by hospitality, and to whom he had just given rich presents, to become their prisoner in the very quarters which he had himself graciously appointed for their entertainment. It is a large assertion to make of anything, that it is the superlative of its kind, but it must, I think, be admitted, that the demand of Cortes was the most audacious that was ever made, and showed an impudence (there is no other fitting word) which borders upon the heroic. At this day, though we have all known the story from childhood, it seems as if it were a new thing; and we still wonder what Montezuma will say in reply to Cortes.

The Monarch's answer, when he could speak at all, was the following:—"I am not one of those persons who are put in prison. Even if I were to consent, my subjects would never permit it."²

¹ "He never set foot to the ground, but was always carried on the shoulders of noblemen."—ACOSTA, *Hist. Nat. y Mor. de Indias*, lib. 7, cap. 22. This assertion, that Montezuma never set foot on the ground, must be confined to his appearances in public; for, when he went in disguise, like an Eastern Caliph, to ascertain whether his judges took bribes, he must have gone about like any other man:—"Also he often disguised himself, offering bribes to his judges, and tempting them to do evil; if they fell into temptation they were immediately punished with death."—ACOSTA, *ibid.*

² FERNANDO D'ALVA IXTLILXOCHITL, *Hist. des Chichimèques*,

244 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

Cortes urged his reasons why Montezuma should adopt the course proposed by the Spaniards, but, as these reasons were based upon falsehood, it is no wonder, that even in the opinion of one of his followers, he should have appeared to have the worse of the argument.¹ This controversy lasted some time, and Cortes himself speaks of the prolixity of the discourse, and betrays all the insolence of a conqueror, when he declares that it is needless to give account of all that passed, as not being substantial to the case.²

Meanwhile the peril of the Spaniards was increasing, and the patience of these fierce men was fast passing away, when one of them, a man with a harsh voice, exclaimed, "What is the use of all these words? Let him yield himself our prisoner, or we will this instant stab him. Wherefore, tell him that if he cries out, or makes disturbance, we must kill him, for it is more important in this conjuncture that we should secure our own lives than lose them." Montezuma turned to Donna Marina for the meaning of this fierce utterance; and we cannot but be glad that it was a woman who had to interpret these rough words to the falling Monarch, and even to play the part of counsellor as well as interpreter. She begged him to go with the Spaniards without any resistance; for, she said, she knew that they would honour him much, like a great Lord as he was; and that on the other side lay the danger of immediate death.

The unfortunate Montezuma now made a last effort to obviate the dire indignity. He said, "My Lord Malinché, may this please you:—I have one son and two daughters, legitimate. Take them as hostages, and do not put this affront upon me. What will my nobles say, if they see

chap. 85;—TERNAUX-COMPANS, *Voyages*. This account, given by the historian of Mexican origin, is confirmed in some respects by BERNAL DIAZ, who says, "That he was not one of those persons who received commands from any one."—Cap. 95.

¹ "Cortes replied with very good reasons and Montezuma answered him with still better."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 95.

² "About this much conversation and discussion followed which would be long to write or even give an account of to Your Majesty, being prolix and not material to the case."—LORENZANA, p. 86.

me borne away as a prisoner?" But Cortes was not the man to swerve in the least from his purpose, and he said that Montezuma must come with them, and that no other thing would do.

The Monarch was obliged to yield. It is said, and is not improbable, that he was urged to declare that he acted thus in obedience to a response given by Huitzilopochtli, the Mexican god of war, though this was hardly the fitting deity to choose as the imputed instrument of such ignoble counsel.

Orders were instantly given to prepare apartments for Montezuma in the Spaniards' quarters. The Mexican nobles, whose duty it was to bear his litter, came at his bidding, and prepared themselves, barefooted, with their accustomed humility, and with more than their accustomed affection, to place the litter on their shoulders. But, as all pomp and state, even in the mightiest monarchies, requires some time for arrangement and preparation, it appears that the equipage itself was but a poor one.¹ And so, in a sorry manner, borne on by his weeping nobles, and in deep silence, Montezuma quitted his palace, never to return, and moved towards the Spanish quarters. On his way he encountered throngs of his faithful subjects, who, though they could hardly be aware of what the transaction meant, would, at the slightest nod of the Monarch, have thrown themselves upon the swords of the Spaniards, in all the plenitude of devotion of a people who believed in their King as the greatest of men, and as the Vicegerent of their gods on earth.

But no such signal came. Slowly and silently the litter passed onwards; and it must have been with strange misgivings that the people saw their Monarch encompassed by those whom they had long known to be their enemies, the Tlascalcan allies of Cortes, and by a strange race of bearded, armed men, who seemed, as it were, to have risen from the earth, to appal their nobles and to affront their religion.

¹ "They brought a litter, not very well prepared, and weeping and in deep silence placed him in it."—LORENZANA, p. 86.

246 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

This is an unparalleled transaction. There is nothing like it, I believe, in the annals of the world.¹

The completeness of the despotism of Montezuma was a great part of his ruin. It was noticed by the Spaniards, as they entered Mexico, that his grandes did not dare to look him in the face. To use the expressive words of the chronicler, "they did not, in thought even, look up at him, but kept their eyes fixed on the wall."² It was very natural, therefore, for Cortes to think that striking a blow at the head would paralyze all the body politic in Mexico. He would hardly have thought of seizing any one of the Chiefs of Tlascala, where there was a Senate and men of nearly equal authority. In such a case the indignity is felt by all, and the power to avenge it is scarcely lessened by the forced removal of any one.

In a short time the officers who had been sent for by Montezuma's signet were brought to Mexico. They were, in all, seventeen persons. Being asked if they had made the attack on the Spaniards by Montezuma's orders, they said no: but, upon their sentence being carried into execution, which sentence was, that they should be burnt,³ they all confessed that it was by Montezuma's orders they had acted. Cortes, thereupon, added to the inhumanity of this atrocious sentence upon these unfortunate men the cruel indignity to Montezuma of putting him in irons during their execution, which took place in front of the palace.⁴ Terror was evidently what the Spaniard throughout relied upon; and, in doing so, he appealed to an influence which had long been predominant in the mind of every Mexican. One who loved them well,⁵ and who devoted his life to their conversion,

¹ [Oviedo remarks that Montezuma must have been, to say the least, of a "very prudent" nature.]

² BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 88.

³ Very justly had Cortes displayed the blue and white flames upon his banner.

⁴ [Cortes gave him to understand this was a mild punishment because he loved him, and that his crime merited death. The condemned men were burnt on heaps of Aztec weapons, a skilful method of ensuring an at least partial disarmament.]

⁵ PETER OF GHENT.

owns that their character was servile.¹ They had been taught, he says, to do nothing for the love of good, but all things solely from the fear of punishment. To appease their gods they would sacrifice their own children. In truth, though taking many forms, terror was their god; and now a greater terror than they had hitherto known—a terror amenable to none of their priests—had come amongst them. Premature decay is ever inherent in a one-sided cultivation of the powers, the intellect, or the affections of mankind.

¹ "They are well disposed to accept our religion, but what is bad is that their character is servile. They do nothing but by force, nor can one obtain anything of them by gentleness or persuasion; that does not proceed from their natural character, but is the result of long habit. They have been accustomed to do nothing from the love of good, but only from fear of punishment. All their sacrifices, which consist of the slaughter or mutilation of their own children, were due not to the love with which their gods inspired them, but to the terror."—*Lettre du Frère PIERRE DE GAND, en date du 27 Juin, 1529.* TERNAUX-COMPANS, *Voyages*.

CHAPTER VI

CONSEQUENCES OF THE CAPTURE—MONTEZUMA BECOMES A VASSAL
OF THE KING OF SPAIN—PAMPHILO DE NARVAEZ ARRIVES
UPON THE COAST—CORTES QUILTS MEXICO AND DEFEATS
NARVAEZ

THE pretext of Montezuma's capture being disposed of, we naturally turn to consider the consequences of the capture itself. We may imagine the rumours which ran through the city after Montezuma had been seen to accompany the Spaniards to their quarters—what a fervid noise rose up from the thronged market-place as the news was bruited there; how it was re-echoed in the gay streets, where the boatmen exchanged news with the passers-by on dry land; what fierce intonation was given to it in the sacred precincts of the temple, in the colleges, and the convents; and with what subdued and stealthy voices the matter was discussed in the palaces of grave and powerful nobles.

The wary Cortes strove to make the imprisonment look as much like a visit as possible. The Mexican King received ambassadors, directed judges, held his court, and continued to fulfil the functions of royalty nearly after the same fashion that he had been accustomed to. He was not restricted in his amusements, not even in the chase; and the slightest indignity shown to him by any Spaniard was severely punished by Cortes.

Meanwhile, what were the thoughts, the plans, the hopes, and the fears of this captive Monarch? Historians, who are often supposed to know everything, and to be able to write with an insight into the minds of their principal personages, possessed only by the writers of fiction, will always be sorely puzzled to account for Montezuma's conduct. But, if one is obliged to give any explanation

of it, that explanation must, I think, be based upon the ground that Montezuma really believed in the notion that the coming of Cortes and his men fulfilled the traditions of the Mexican race. A near acquaintance with the Spaniards gave Montezuma a greater insight into, and apprehension of, their power than was possessed by most of his subjects. Moreover, he doubtless perceived that his best chance of preserving his own life, was in preventing disturbance of any kind. It must be recollected also, that in dealing with Cortes he had to encounter one of the craftiest of men; and, finally, the circumstances were such as would have greatly perplexed any man who was not perfectly ready to peril his own life,—who did not, to use an emphatic expression, carry his life in his hand.

It is not attempted here to write a complete history of Mexico, and only those salient transactions must be given which especially illustrate the course of the Conquest, and which can be relied upon. Now, the limits of Montezuma's freedom of action, the extent of the power which Cortes had gained by bringing Montezuma to his quarters, and the general feeling of the Mexican people can hardly be indicated better than by the religious exercises of the Mexican Monarch. Had the captive been of the religion of his captors, or of any religion which did not require public demonstration, a chapel might have been put up in his prison, and, comparatively speaking, much less would have been indicated by the Monarch's absence from, or presence at, religious rites and ceremonies. But, whatever was left of kingship in Montezuma must be seen, or inferred, from his presence on the summit of that dread temple which overlooked the whole city. Accordingly, we find that Montezuma demanded permission from Cortes (what humbling of the mighty!) to go to his temple to make sacrifices and to fulfil his devotions, in order, as he probably told the Spaniards, that he might show himself to his people, and, afterwards, give his captains and principal men to understand that it was by the command of his god Huitzilopochtli that he continued to remain in the power of the Spaniards. Cortes wisely granted the request, warning Montezuma at the same time, that if there were any disturbance, it would be at the peril of

250 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

his life. To ensure the constant presence of that peril, one hundred and fifty Spanish soldiers were to accompany the King. Cortes also made it a condition that there should be no human sacrifices. There were, he said, the altars of the Christian religion and the image of "Our Lady," before which the King might pray. Montezuma promised that he would sacrifice no living soul, and set forth to the great temple in full state with his sceptre borne before him, his people and his nobles showing themselves as obedient and as respectful as heretofore. But the human sacrifices had already taken place, for, in the preceding night, four Indians¹ had been sacrificed. The assertion, therefore, of Cortes, that while he was in Mexico no human sacrifices were allowed,² must be taken with considerable limitations. The truth is, that neither Cortes nor the prudent Father Olmedo could at that time prevent these sacrifices taking place, for, as Bernal Diaz says, "they were obliged to dissimulate with Montezuma, as Mexico was much disposed to revolt, and other great cities, together with the nephews of Montezuma." The King did not stay long in the temple, and when he returned, he was in high good humour, and gave largesse to the soldiers who accompanied him. It was, no doubt, a great satisfaction to the poor Monarch, to have been able to show himself to his people in so much apparent freedom.

We discern from what has just been stated about the inability of Cortes to put a stop to human sacrifice, that the Spanish General, though he had the person of the Mexican Monarch in his power, found still much to conquer in the disposition of the Mexican people, and in the near relations of Montezuma, some of whom were kings themselves. There can be no doubt that many of Montezuma's devoted adherents offered to make an effort to release their master, to all of whom he replied that it was the will of Huitzilopochtli that he should be kept in this durance, or, at least, he intimated that it was his own will that they should

¹ "The night previous they had sacrificed four Indians."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 98.

² "All the time that I dwelt in the city they were never seen to kill or sacrifice a human being."—LORENZANA, p. 107.

make no move for the present. There was one member, however, of the Mexican royal family who was not to be controlled so easily. This was Cacamatzin, the nephew of Montezuma, and King of Tezcuco, a beautiful city on the borders of the Salt Lake, in which Mexico was situated. There is not time in this world for discussing minutely the family affairs of semi-barbarian princes with unpleasant names, who have perished long ago; and, therefore, I shall merely relate the fate of Cacamatzin, who was the chief personage in the conspiracy amongst the Mexican lords and princes which now threatened the domination of Cortes.

The Spanish General first sought to gain over Cacamatzin himself; but, failing in this, he then endeavoured to bring the influence of Montezuma to bear upon his nephew, in order to allure him within the power of the Spaniards. But the brave young Prince was filled with scorn at the patience of his uncle, and with indignation at the proceedings of the strangers. He had before counselled war, and that the Spaniards should have been met at the pass of the Sierra of Chalco; and he now declared that his uncle was no better than a hen. He said that the Spaniards were wizards, who by their magic had charmed away the great heart and courage of Montezuma. Their force, he maintained, resided not in them, but in their gods, and in the great woman of Castille (*la gran muger de Castilla*), for thus he designated the Virgin.

Such an enemy must, at all cost, be secured; and Montezuma, won over by Cortes, and probably informed of his nephew's contemptuous speeches, consented to a deed, the most deplorable of any which mark his captivity.¹ It appears that he had in his pay some of the principal persons at the court of Tezcuco.² By their

¹ [Cacamatzin attempted to gain Montezuma to his plans for open warfare against the Spaniards. Montezuma feared for his position and life in the event of success and informed Cortes; it was then that Cortes thought that the matter could be better dealt with by craft than by violence.]

² The Mexican historian, IXTLILXOCHITL, makes the brothers of Cacamatzin guilty of this treachery:—"Cacamá, who suspected nothing, followed his brothers, who when he was in the canoe seized

252 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

means Cacamatzin's people were to be gained over, and his person secured. This scheme was successful. At a midnight meeting, when the Tezcucan King was concerting his plans for attacking Mexico, he was seized, hurried into a boat (the waters of the Lake ran underneath his palace), and was carried off to Mexico,¹ where Cortes put him in chains.

It was now less difficult for Cortes to persuade Montezuma to give some public sign of fealty to the King of Spain. The unfortunate Monarch consented to summon his nobles and dependent princes for that purpose. No Spaniard was present at the first interview of the King with his nobles, save Orteguilla, a page in the suite of Cortes.

The account which we have of this conference, and for which the young page must be responsible, seems to be very like the truth. The Monarch began by reminding his counsellors of the history of their ancestors, and of the prophecy that from the East should come those who were to have the lordship over the land of Mexico (*señoría estas tierras*). It is in the rendering of such expressions as the above that we may suspect a leaning towards that which should be the requisite Spanish sense of the words; but where so much is mere conjecture, I would not say that he did not use such an expression, which he is made to emphasize by the following words of his speech, in which he declared that at that time, namely, upon the advent of those people, the Mexican Empire was to cease.

A despot like Montezuma cannot, without a diminution of dignity, quote any less important personages than the gods of his country. He accordingly proceeded to declare that the Spaniards who had now arrived were the expected strangers. He added, that Huitzilopochtli,

him, took him to Mexico and delivered him into the hands of Cortes."—*Histoire des Chichimèques*, chap. 86; TERNAUX-COMPANS, *Voyages*.

¹ "He would speak with them in order to induce some of Cacamatzin's followers to come there, and, betrayed and secured, they might favour our attempt to take their master without risk."—LORENZANA, p. 95.

MONTEZUMA ACCEPTS VASSALAGE 253

having been sacrificed to and consulted by the priests upon the present juncture of affairs, would not respond as usual. All that the god would give them to understand was, that what he had said to them at other times was that which he gave now for a response, and that they should not ask him more.¹ The politic idol! No Delphian oracle could have shown more craft; but the conclusion which Montezuma chose to draw was, that the Mexicans should offer obedience to the King of Castille, "for," he added, with the faith in coming events proving favourable, which belongs to those who lack the presence of mind to strike a bold stroke now, "nothing comes of that at present,"² and, as time goes on, we shall see if we have another better reply from our gods, and, as we shall see the occasion, so we will act; for the present," continued the Monarch, "that which I command and beseech you, is to give some sign of vassalage, and soon I will tell you what it may better befit us to do." He then told them how he was importuned by Malinché to give this sign of vassalage. Finally, he appealed to their loyalty and their gratitude. Had he not enriched them, made broad their lands, and given to them governments? If he were detained in this durance, was it not that their gods permitted it, and (as he had often had occasion to tell them) that Huitzilopochtli had enjoined upon him to stay where he was?

The Mexican lords responded dutifully to their Sovereign's demands; but neither could they, nor could the Monarch himself, conceal the grief which insisted upon being felt at such humiliation. They wept; they sobbed: and for once the full flow of human passion was permitted at this precise court, in the presence of their dread Sovereign,—still dread to them, and never, perhaps, so dear. It represented the wailing of a whole nation, who had been accustomed to think themselves the greatest people upon earth, and who now saw their dignity trampled upon by a small body of unknown men.

¹ BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 101.

² *Ibid.*

254 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

When the conference broke up, Montezuma sent a messenger to Cortes, informing him, that the next day they would perform the act of vassalage to the King of Castille. Accordingly, on the following day, in the presence of Cortes and the Spaniards, Montezuma made an address to his lords similar to the speech which he had uttered the day before, except that the hopes he had hinted, and the consolations he had suggested, in their private interview, did not, for manifest reasons, find a place in this deplorable discourse, which was an undisguised recommendation of vassalage to the King of Spain.

Montezuma could bring himself to utter the words wrung from him by the importunity of Cortes, but he could not command his feelings sufficiently to do so with anything like regal unconcern. From the first to the last his speech was broken by sobs,¹ and by uncontrollable emotion. When he had ended, his lords could not reply to him for some time, so great was their anguish, and so loud their lamentations. The Spaniards themselves were almost as much moved as the Mexicans, and there was amongst them a soldier who wept as much as Montezuma himself.²

At last, the Mexican lords were sufficiently composed to declare themselves, "jointly and severally," vassals to the King of Spain. Never was a great empire more strangely and suddenly, and, we may say, ludicrously humiliated. Never did the animal creation play so great a part. Had Montezuma possessed twenty horses, his Empire would, I am convinced, have stood, at least for some time longer. This ceremony of professing vassalage was performed with all due legalities, a notary being present, and drawing up a solemn attestation of the proceedings.

As might be expected, one of the first things demanded

¹ "All this he said to them weeping with more tears and sighs than a man ought to show, and likewise all the nobles who heard him wept so much that for a long time they could not answer. I assure Your Sacred Majesty that there was not one of the Spaniards who heard that discourse but who felt great compassion."—LORENZANA, p. 97.

² BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 191.

of Montezuma after this act of vassalage, was gold, of which a great quantity—no less than to the value of one hundred thousand ducats—was handed over to Cortes by the King.¹

Cortes, who possessed a mind of the highest capacity for civil as well as military business, turned to the best account the power and influence which he had obtained over Montezuma. It will serve to illustrate the difference between a soldier who is more than half a statesman, and the vulgar, semi-animal conqueror, to see what were the objects Cortes instantly turned his attention to instead of the ordinary pillage and rapine which would have absorbed the whole attention of a mere man of conquest in a similar position. But Cortes reminds us of Cæsar; and war with him was but a means to an end.

He first took care to ascertain where the Mexican gold mines were to be found, and forthwith sent Spaniards, accompanied by Montezuma's officers, into the several provinces designated as gold-producing.

Then he took measures to accomplish that which had, from the first, been a great object with him,² namely, to discover a good harbour in the Gulf of Mexico. On inquiring of Montezuma in reference to this point, the Monarch replied, that he did not know of any such harbour (and, indeed, the coast is very deficient in harbourage); but he provided Cortes with a picture of the whole coast, made for the occasion, in which the roadsteads and the rivers were all set down; and then Cortes sent out an exploring party of Spaniards. It is remarkable that, both in this expedition, and in those which went out to survey the gold-producing provinces, the Spaniards found native chiefs who were willing to receive the messengers of Cortes, and who sent them back with gracious messages,

¹ [There are various estimates of the value of this treasure, a hoard hidden in the palace, of which Cortes had known for some time. Mr. Prescott reckons it as worth some £1,400,000 at present rates. The division raised much clamour and nearly a mutiny; after deducting a fifth for the Emperor, a fifth for Cortes, and making other especial payments, not more than £250 each, on the highest calculation of equivalents, remained for the rank and file. Probably it was much less than £250.]

² "From the time I first landed in this country I had always tried to find a port on the coast."—LORENZANA, p. 93.

256 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

—such was already the fame of the Spanish Conqueror throughout New Spain ; but these same chiefs would not allow the officers of Montezuma to enter their country.

We may here mention a circumstance which, though slight in itself, serves well to illustrate the talents of Cortes for government, namely, that on the return of one of these exploring parties, finding that they gave a very favourable account of the fertility of the province they had visited, Cortes asked Montezuma to make a farm there for the King of Spain, where the cultivation of maize, and of cacao, the money of the country, was immediately commenced. It would have been long before a mere soldier like Pedro de Alvarado would have thought of these things.

But the triumph of Cortes, and that use of his power for which he has been likened to Judas Maccabæus, was in the destruction of the hideous Mexican idols, the cleansing of their foul chapels, and the stern forbidding of human sacrifice. Montezuma himself and many of his lords were present at the downfall of these idols.¹ It must have been a glorious sight ; and Cortes, who has enough evil to answer for, may on the other hand, be greatly praised for this deed, which alone must ever separate him from the Timours, Attilas, Genghis Khans, and other unmeaning, purposeless destroyers of mankind. Cortes tells his master Charles the Fifth, that Montezuma and the Mexican nobles assisted at the deposition of their idols with a joyful countenance. Great, then, must have been their command of countenance. What they felt in their hearts is not known to us ; but any one who has observed mankind and seen that there is no stronger feeling, nor one which men are more proud of, than that which binds together a class, a sect, a guild, or a profession, must know what an intensity of enmity Cortes would thenceforward have to contend against in the priesthood whom he had thus mocked and brought to nought. I much fear, too, that

¹ "The said Mutezuma and many of the principal persons of the city, until the idols were removed, the chapels purified, and the images placed in them, seeing all with apparent gladness."—LORENZANA, p. 107.

even if no human sacrifice took place on the sacred stones of the great pyramidal temple, yet that in many a dark and secret chamber the god of war was propitiated with the usual rites, and with no lack of human hearts laid before some rude and hastily-compounded effigy of this monster demon.

These plans for mining, farming, and surveying the country, and for converting the inhabitants, did not render Cortes inattentive to the first care he had on hand,—namely, that of self-defence. It was easy at a glance to see that the warlike science of the Spaniards, superior in all respects, would be remarkably so when manifested on the water; and, moreover, that a sure mode of withdrawal or escape would be provided for them, if they could have a few vessels launched upon the great Salt Lake of Mexico. The first care, therefore, of Cortes was to build brigantines that might go upon the Lake.

The position of Montezuma, one of the most curious recorded in history,¹ remained unchanged for many months. Cortes pursued with steadiness his ends, waiting for good news and for any reinforcements that might come to him from Spain and from Hispaniola. Meanwhile, Montezuma continued to govern as usual, only that he governed in the direction prescribed by Cortes, that is, as regarded those affairs in which the Spanish Commander took an interest.

It was impossible that such a mode of government could be otherwise than most distasteful to the chief persons governed. To have a foreign Mayor of the Palace lording it over them, was more than any people could be expected to submit to; but in this case there were also other causes of offence, each one sufficient to produce a revolution,—in the imprisonment of several royal personages, near relations of the King, and in the

¹ He might be compared to one of the Merovingian Kings of France, with an all-powerful Mayor of the Palace; but then Montezuma's Mayor was a stranger who, as it were, had dropped amongst them like a meteoric stone.

258 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

changes which Cortes had made, or attempted to make, in matters of religion. It must not be forgotten that the priesthood of Mexico was also the fountain of education; and it may be conceived with what ardour the young men of the great city would embrace the side of the priesthood. For youth, according to that strange inversion often seen in human affairs, is the time at which prejudices are strongest, the capability of judging being at its lowest,—all which might be of little matter, however, but that the readiness to act upon those prejudices is ten times greater then than at any other period of life. A youth does not understand holding a strong opinion, and not doing something to enforce it. Nor was the present an occasion when the older and graver men of a city would be likely to impose the least restraint upon the younger and the more impatient. The King imprisoned, the royal family maltreated, the chiefs made nought of, a foreign enemy introduced into the capital, and, above all, the gods deposed and ridiculed, what could be expected but that the citizens of Mexico should be in a state of fervour and ebullition, hardly to be repressed even by the risk of immediate personal injury to their Monarch?

Montezuma himself bore his imprisonment quietly enough for some time. Cortes ventured to tempt him on several occasions with the offer of liberty, which the Monarch refused to profit by, alleging that, if he were in entire liberty, he might be compelled by the importunity of his vassals to take such steps against the Spaniards as he himself would not approve of.¹

It must be confessed that Montezuma appears to have been a mean-spirited person. He may, however, have suspected that the proposal of Cortes was only made for the purpose of sounding him, which certainly was the case. As the days went on, his nobles became more importunate, his priests more imperative, his own discontent more developed; and this feeling was probably augmented by various little slights to his dignity of

¹ "His vassals might importune him and induce him to do something contrary to his wish and opposed to Your Majesty's interests, while he was resolved to serve Your Majesty in every possible way."—LORENZANA, p. 88.

which history makes no mention, but upon which, like all monarchs, he doubtless laid much stress. There certainly was a change at this period in Montezuma's conduct, and such are the motives for it which may be deduced from the account of an historian,¹ who, whatever his inaccuracies, had at least the advantage, as a chaplain of Cortes, of hearing his version of the matter. The Chaplain assigns three motives for this change in Montezuma; the continued importunities of his people, an interview which the King had with the Devil, and the mutability of human nature. It is said by the Spanish historians, that Montezuma secretly prepared an army of an hundred thousand men; but this is not at all likely, as it could hardly have been done without the cognizance of the two thousand Tlascalans who were in the city.²

One day, in the sixth month of his imprisonment, the King, accompanied by several of his nobles, went into the square of the palace, and sent for Cortes. This was a very unusual proceeding. Cortes was accustomed to pay his court to Montezuma once or twice in the day, but had not, I imagine, ever been sent for before. "I do not like this novelty," he exclaimed; "please God there may be no mischief in it." Accompanied by a few Spaniards, Cortes went immediately into the Monarch's presence, who took him by the hand, led him into a room where seats were placed for them both, and then addressed him thus:—"I pray you, take your departure from this my city and land, for my gods are very angry that I keep you here. Ask of me what you may want,

¹ GOMARA.

² I agree with what Clavigero says upon this matter, who seems in general to show much judgment in writing upon these affairs:—"Practically all the Spanish historians say that when the King summoned Cortes to communicate to him the order to depart, he had an army ready to enforce obedience in case there was any resistance. But there is great discrepancy among them; for some assert that there were 100,000 men under arms, others reduce that number by half, and finally others bring it down to 5000. For my part, I am persuaded that there were actually some troops in readiness, but not by order of the King—only by that of some of the nobles who were most deeply engaged in that affair."—CLAVIGERO, *Storia Antica del Messico*, tom. 3, lib. 9, p. 112.

and I will give it you. Do not think that I say this to you in any jest, but very much in earnest. Wherefore, fulfil my desire, that so it may be done in every contingency."

Cortes, a man whom events might surprize, but could not discompose, replied at once: "I have heard what you have said, and thank you much for it. Name a time when you wish us to depart, and so it shall be." To this, the polite Monarch replied again, "I do not wish you to go but at your own time" (meaning, he did not wish to hurry them away). "Take the time that seems to you necessary, and when you do go, I will give to you, Cortes, two loads of gold, and one to each of your companions." By the time that the conversation had advanced thus far, an excellent excuse for delay occurred to Cortes. "You are already well aware, my Lord," he said, "how I destroyed my ships, when I first landed in your territory. And so now we have need of other ships in order to return to our own country. Wherefore, I should be obliged if you would give us workmen to cut and work the wood. I myself have ship-builders, and when the ships are built, we will take our departure. Inform your deities and your vassals of this." Montezuma assented: Cortes was provided with Mexican workmen who were sent to Vera Cruz under Spanish officers, and the building of ships was commenced in earnest, though it is highly improbable that Cortes had the slightest intention of taking his departure in them.

It has been said, and was, I dare say, commonly reported amongst the Spanish soldiers, that Cortes told Montezuma on this occasion, that he would have to accompany the Spaniards in order to be presented to the King of Spain; but the whole course of the narrative contradicts this statement, and it would have been perfect madness in Cortes at this juncture to make Montezuma so desperate as such a threat would infallibly have made him. Cortes no doubt relied upon palliatives and delays, in the hope of receiving, in the meantime, succour from home. Throughout the interview, according to the accounts that remain of it from the two most credible historians, it is

discernible that the tone of the Mexican King towards Cortes was altered from that which it had been.¹ The Spanish soldiers appreciated the danger of their position, and went about much depressed (*muy pensativos*), and fully on their guard against any sudden attack. Indeed, this little body of men lived in their armour, and formed such habits of wariness, that years of peace and lordship could not efface the watchful customs which they had acquired at this eventful period of their lives, so that one of them afterwards describes how he could never pass a night in bed, but must get up, and walk about in the open air, and gaze at the stars.²

If such were the feelings of the common men, what must have been those of their Commander? What agonies of sleepless indecision must have beset his couch, unless, indeed, he were composed of different material from that of other men? A slight disturbance in the street, a momentary outbreak of fanaticism, a quarrel in the market-place between some Tlascalan and Mexican—and the flame of discord, once aroused, might spread throughout the city, consume the little band of Spaniards and their allies, and leave a great conquest unfulfilled. Then would the name and fame of Cortes be no more than those of some of the minor heroes in this story, such as Ojeda or Nicuesa, whose history is tedious to tell, but who must be spoken of, as they filled up the trenches over which wiser or more fortunate men marched to the accomplishments of great designs.

It was not, however, by any enemies in the city of Mexico that the fortunes of Cortes were next to be

¹ BERNAL DIAZ puts the following brusque speech into Montezuma's mouth:—"He said that he would provide workmen, and that the business should be put in hand at once, so that there should be no more words but deeds instead."—Cap. 108. And Gomara says that Cortes remarked the change:—"It did not seem to him that Montezuma received him in the same way as formerly."—GOMARA, *Crónica de la Nueva-España*, cap. 94.

² "Even now I can sleep but a short time only, and I get up at intervals to take a turn in the open air and look upon the heavens and the stars, nor do I wear a nightcap or cover my head. . . . I have merely mentioned all this to convince the reader how we, the Conquistadores, were always obliged to be upon our guard."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 108.

262 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

assailed. He had entered Mexico on the 8th November of the year 1519 : it was now the beginning of May 1520 ; and, in these few months, he had accomplished more than any conqueror, before him or after him, ever did with so small a force at his command. Meanwhile he had heard nothing from Cuba or from the mother country ; and it was certain that whatever should come, either in the way of news or of supplies, would prove a considerable succour or a great hindrance. A few days after the unpleasant interview with Montezuma, above recorded, he received intelligence of a most important and perplexing event ; namely, that eighteen ships had arrived in the Bay of San Juan, not far from his little colony at Vera Cruz. The alarming news (alarming on account of the number of the vessels) was confirmed by a letter he received from a Spaniard whom he had appointed to watch that coast.¹ This slight circumstance affords a striking instance of the foresight of Cortes ; and then the thoughtless exclaim, such persons are fortunate ! Cortes instantly despatched messengers in different directions to gain further intelligence about these vessels. Fifteen days passed without any messenger returning—fifteen days of terrible anxiety for Cortes. At last Montezuma communicated to the Spanish General, that he was aware of the arrival of these new-comers, and that they had disembarked in in the port of San Juan. Moreover, the Monarch was able to show Cortes a picture of the forces that had disembarked, which consisted of eighty horses, eight hundred men, and ten or twelve cannon. The messengers who brought this news to Mexico added a piece of intelligence very significant of evil for Cortes ; namely, that the messengers whom he had sent were with the newly-arrived strangers, and that the General would not let them come away.

There was now no excuse for Cortes to delay his return on account of the want of vessels, and so, it is said, Montezuma intimated ; but it is probable that if the

¹ " Brought me a letter from a Spaniard whom I had stationed on the coast in order that, if the ships arrived, he might give them information of me, and of the town near that port, so that no harm should come to them."—LORENZANA, p. 116.

NARVAEZ ARRIVES ON THE COAST 263

King felt any joy at this opportunity of getting rid of an enemy, or at least of a very importunate friend, he also had a terrible apprehension that the arrival of this additional force from Spain boded no good to himself. On the day when this intelligence was communicated, Montezuma and Cortes dined together, and were particularly gracious to each other; but dismay and apprehension waited unbidden at the board, and leavened alike the smiles of the timid Monarch and of the crafty General.¹

Cortes lost no time in despatching Father Olmedo with a letter to his newly arrived countrymen, in which he informed their General, whoever he might be, of what had happened since his own arrival in the country, of the towns he had gained and pacified, and of the treasures which he was in charge of for the King of Spain. He then demanded on what authority this General came, and whether he were in need of anything? The good Father departed, and it is conjectured that he carried inducements of a very solid kind to be distributed amongst the subordinates of the General, in case he should prove intractable.

I do not doubt that the fears of Cortes predominated over his hopes. He had left too much hostility behind him, not to have great occasion for fear upon any arrival of his countrymen. His fears were justified. This formidable armament was sent by his former master, and now bitter enemy, the Governor of Cuba. It originally consisted of nineteen ships, carrying fourteen hundred soldiers, twenty pieces of cannon, eighty cavalry, and a hundred and sixty muskets and cross-bows; but the Mexican painters were right in describing but eighteen vessels, for one of them had been lost. This considerable force had been entrusted to Pamphilo de Narvaez, the same man whose expedition to pacificate Cuba Las

¹ I have no doubt, however, that, like most wise men, Cortes knew how to postpone his anxieties as much as possible; and that, whatever the delicate Indian King might do, Cortes was sure to make a good dinner. His appetite, like that of most great men who exert their minds, was very vigorous.—“He was a very large eater, and temperate in drink.”—*Crónica de la Nueva-España*, cap. 238. BARCIA, *Historiadores*, tom. 2.

264 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

Casas accompanied; and his instructions were to seize Cortes and his companions.¹ The danger to Cortes was imminent.

But Narvaez was quite another man from Cortes, and proceeded at once to such extremities, as probably to weaken his influence over his own men, and even to cause a protestation to be made from an important personage in the fleet, the Licentiate Ayllon, whom, however, he put into confinement and sent away.² Narvaez sent a flattering message to Montezuma, telling him that he would release him, and that he came to seize upon Cortes. He also sought to gain the garrison at Vera Cruz, but they were true to their Commander. Not so the Cempoalans, in whose town Narvaez took up his quarters. They very naturally took part with the larger force, and, as Cortes remarks, desired to be on the conquering side (*querian ser á viva quien vence*).

It was time for Cortes to appear upon the scene of greatest danger; and, accordingly, quitting Mexico with but seventy of his own men, he commended those whom he left and his treasures to Montezuma's good offices, as to one who was a faithful vassal to the King of Spain.³ This parting speech seems most audacious, but a plenary audacity was part of the wisdom of Cortes. At Cholula he came up with his lieutenant, Juan Velazquez, and his men, joined company with them, and pushed on towards

¹ [By the Cédula of 13th November 1518 Diego Velazquez was constituted Adelantado over all territories discovered by himself or his agents. Pamphilo Narvaez was ordered to send Cortes back in chains to Cuba. For various reasons the *Audiencia* of Española, the highest legal jurisdiction, favoured Cortes rather than Velazquez, and forbade the expedition unless Narvaez was ordered to present only a peaceable claim to Cortes, and in the event of refusal to sail away elsewhere.—*Col. de Doc. Inéd. . . . de Indias*, xiii, p. 337.]

² [Ayllon belonged to the *Audiencia* of Española, and had been sent with the fleet to see that the arrangement of the preceding note was carried out. As the result of the treatment he received, all the influence of the *Audiencia* was exerted against Velazquez and Narvaez.]

³ Cortes told Montezuma, "That he should remember that he was Your Majesty's vassal, and that now he was about to receive reward from Your Majesty for the services he had rendered."—LORENZANA, p. 123.

CORTES ATTACKS AND DEFEATS 265

Cempoala. When he approached the town, he prepared to make an attack by night on the position which Narvaez occupied, and which was no other than the great temple at Cempoala. Cortes and his men knew the position well. Narvaez must, I think, have displaced the gods, for he occupied three or four of the towers of the temple. This distribution of his forces was fatal to him.

On the other side the plan was, that sixty young men, chosen for their activity, should make themselves masters of the cannon, and then that Sandoval, one of the bravest lieutenants of Cortes, should make an attack upon the tower where Narvaez was to be found. Round this tower eighteen large cannon were placed, but so prompt was the attack, that though it did not find the enemy unprepared, there was not time to fire more than four of the guns, and for the most part the shots went over the heads of the attacking party. The artillery being in the hands of Cortes's men, Sandoval succeeded in forcing his way up the tower, and capturing Narvaez. Meanwhile Cortes held the base; and the enemy, who do not seem to have been very willing or alert, and who were led to suppose that their Commander had fallen, were mastered so speedily and so effectually, that Cortes had but three men killed and Narvaez but fifteen. During the action, the moon, as if she had been a partizan of Cortes and was weary of looking down upon the horrid sacrifices which he was come to put an end to, withdrew herself behind the clouds, and suffered the Narvaez faction, new to the land, to believe that certain luminous creatures (*cocayos*) were the glittering of numerous muskets in the hands of the Cortesians. No sooner, however, was the action decided, than she came forth in all her splendour to illustrate and honour the victory.

In the encounter, Narvaez lost an eye: he was afterwards sent as a prisoner to Vera Cruz. His men, not without resistance on the part of some of them, ultimately ranged themselves under the banner of Cortes; and thus was a great danger¹ turned into a welcome succour.

¹ How great the danger was, may be appreciated by "the winning words full of promise" which Cortes uttered in his speech to the men previous to the attack. For those who have time to study history

266 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

Cortes received the conquered troops in the most winning manner, and created an enthusiasm in his favour. One of the soldiers of Narvaez, a negro and a comical fellow, danced and shouted for joy, crying, "Where are the Romans who with such small numbers have ever achieved so great a victory?"

The first thought of Cortes was to divide his troops: for, as the vanquished far outnumbered the victors, some disturbance might easily occur, and the men of Narvaez could not yet be relied upon as firm adherents. Cortes accordingly employed two hundred Spaniards in founding a town at Coatzacualco, the same spot to which he had before sent an expedition. He also dispatched two hundred men to Vera Cruz, where he had given orders that the vessels should be transported; and two hundred he sent to another place. His next care was to dispatch a messenger to Mexico, to give an account of his victory, of which, at his suggestion, a painted representation¹ was sent to Montezuma by the Indians of Cempoala.

minutely, the speech is well worth referring to. It was made on horse-back, and therefore was not long.—See BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 122.

¹ "A painted representation of what had happened, Narvaez wounded and a prisoner, his people surrendered to Cortes victorious, and the artillery captured."—TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. 4, cap. 66.

[The easy victory was perhaps largely won before the antagonists came to action. Negotiators had passed freely between the two camps, and those of Cortes had not failed by bribes, persuasions, and pictures of the wealth to be obtained by following him, to shake the allegiance of the soldiers of Narvaez, who was not popular among his own men. The fact that his artillery did no execution is said to have been due to the touch-holes having been plugged by men in the pay of Cortes. Narvaez was a person who was very well satisfied with himself, and after his capture said to Cortes, "'Señor Cortes, you may hold high the good fortune you have had, and the great achievement of securing my person.' With a twinkle of malicious merriment Cortes regarded for a moment his fallen foe, whose insufferable conceit did not desert him even here, and said, 'Señor Narvaez, many deeds have I performed since coming to Mexico, but the least of them all has been to capture you.'" (H. H. Bancroft, *Mexico*, i, p. 398.)

Narvaez claimed to have been robbed of money and goods to the value of 100,000 castellanos. Cortes, after seizing and ransacking the ships, ordered most of them to be sunk.]



CHAPTER VII

DURING THE ABSENCE OF CORTES THE MEXICANS REBEL —
SIEGE OF THE SPANISH GARRISON—CORTES RETURNS TO
MEXICO

IN fourteen days after the defeat of Narvaez the messenger of Cortes returned to him, bringing from Alvarado the unexpected and unwelcome intelligence, that the Spanish garrison in Mexico were besieged by the citizens, and were in the utmost peril; and that the Indians had set fire to the Spanish quarters in many places, and undermined them. Much of the provisions, he added, had been taken by the enemy; the four brigantines had been burnt; and, although the combat had ceased, the Spaniards were rigorously invested. Finally, Alvarado implored Cortes, for the love of God, to lose no time in succouring them. The causes of this outbreak will furnish a curious illustration of Mexican habits and practices, and require to be told at some length.

It is seldom that the religion of a people is so intimately connected with its warfare as to form part of the same story, but in the case both of the Mexican and Peruvians, transactions of the highest military importance grew out of the proceedings at religious festivals. This is a felicity for the narrative, as it takes these religious ceremonies which were so large a part of the life of the people, out of the list of mere description of manners and political customs, and brings them naturally into the course of events.

The month Toxcatl, in which Cortes was absent from Mexico, was the especial month devoted to religious services. It corresponded nearly with the period of Easter; "as if," says the pious monk ¹ from whom we

¹ TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*.

[Mr. H. H. Bancroft's remarks on these "pious monks" are worth quoting:—"It is given to few men to rise above their age, and it is

268 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

learn these particulars, "the Devil wished to imitate the Christian festival of Easter in order to forget or dissemble the grief which the Christian commemoration caused him."

The Mexican divinity who was chiefly honoured in this month was Tezcatlipuk, and the mode of honouring him was as follows. Ten days before the chief day of the festival, a priest sallied forth from the temple, clad after the fashion of the idol, with flowers in his hand, and with a little flute made of clay, of a very shrill pitch. This priest having turned first to the east sounded his flute; then he turned to the west, and did the same thing; then to the north, and then to the south. Having thus signified that he called upon the attention of all mankind, and required them to celebrate worthily this festival, he remained in silence for a time. Then he placed his hand on the ground, and taking some earth in it, put it in his mouth and ate it, as a token of humility and adoration. All who heard him, did the same thing; and, with the most energetic demonstrations of grief and entreaty, implored the obscurity of night and the wind not to desert them nor forget them, but to deliver them immediately from the troubles of life, and carry them to the place of rest,¹ "as if," adds the indignant monk, "the accursed one could give that which in truth he does not possess for himself."

At the sound of this little flute, which seems as if it represented for them the "still small voice" of conscience, all sinners became very sorrowful and much afraid; and during the ten days that this lasted, their constant prayer to Tezcatlipuk was, that their faults should be hidden from

folly to expect grapes of thorn or figs of thistles; yet it is hard to suppress wholly some feelings of regret in poring over these ponderous tomes of sixteenth- and seventeenth- century history that touch upon Mexican religion; one pities far less the inevitable superstition and childish ignorance of the barbarian than the senility of the Christian historian and critic—there was some element of hope and evidence of attainment in what the half-civilized barbarians knew; but from what heights of Athenian, Roman, and Alexandrian philosophy had civilization fallen into the dull and arrogant nescience of the chronicles of the clergy of Spain" (*Native Races*, iii, p. 181). See also *ante*, p. 234 note.]

¹ TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. 10, cap. 14.

the eyes and the knowledge of men, and pardoned by his gracious clemency.¹ There is a strange wisdom sometimes in these barbarous rites; and here we have an instance of that just fear of the intolerance of his fellow-man (who, moreover, is obliged to pretend to be worse in this respect than he is) which leads the sinner to confide in God, and to fear his fellow-creatures.

Every day this ceremony of the flute was continued, and every day sighs and sobs and agony of soul were offered up, "although," as the monk remarks, with but a shallow reading of the heart of man, "this grief of theirs was only for corporal punishment, which their gods gave them, and not for eternal punishment, for they did not believe that in another life there was a punishment so strict as the Faith teaches us; which, if they had believed, so many of them would not have offered themselves so willingly to death as they did offer themselves, but would have been afraid of the torments which they have to endure for ever."² This remark (of the readiness of the Mexicans to encounter death) is well worthy of notice, as it tends a little to exculpate their practice of human sacrifice; and one is glad, for the sake of human nature, to find anything which tends to explain that form of atrocity.

The ten days having thus passed, the eve before the festival arrived, when the Mexican lords brought new vestments for the idol, and adorned him with feathers, bracelets, and other ornaments, the old ones being put away in a chest, and much honoured. Then the priests drew aside the curtain which was at the entrance of the chapel where the idol stood, and showed it to the assembled people. After this, a priest of great authority came forth with roses in his hand and sounded the little flute with the same ceremony as on the preceding days.

¹ "They asked nothing else of this god but that their sins should be hidden from the eyes and knowledge of men and pardoned by his mercy and clemency."—TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. 10, cap. 14.

² TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. 10, cap. 14.

On the ensuing morning, the great day of the festival having now come, the priests brought out a splendid litter, put the idol upon it, and, taking the burden upon their shoulders, brought it down to the foot of the steps of the great temple. Then came all the youths and maidens who were devoted to the service of the temple and bearing a thick rope made of strings of roasted maize, performed a circuit round the litter. This rope was called after the month Toxcatl, and was a symbol of sterility (Toxcatl meaning a "dry thing"); and the whole drift of the ceremony was to implore Tezcatlipuk, their Jupiter, to give them gracious rain from heaven.

They placed a similar string of maize upon the neck of the idol, and a garland of the same material upon his head. All the youths and maidens were beautifully dressed, and were adorned with garlands of maize. The chief men of the city wore ornaments of the same kind, having these garlands on their heads and necks, and in their hands nosegays of the same material, very curiously constructed.¹

Everywhere, upon the ground, were scattered the thorns of the aloe, in order that devout people might shed their blood in honour of the day.

Then commenced a great procession, the idol being carried in front, with two priests continually incensing it; and, as they threw the incense on high, they prayed that their petitions might go up to heaven like as the smoke ascended.

So far all was innocent enough; but now came the saddest and strangest part of the ceremony. For a year previous to the day of festival, a youth had been chosen, the most beautiful and graceful amongst the captives, who was called the Image of Tezcatlipuk. The youth was instructed in all the arts of gracious courtesy;² and, as he passed along the street, beautifully adorned, and accompanied by the greatest personages, all who met him fell on their knees before him and adored him, while he responded with graciousness to their adorations.

Twenty days before this Festival they gave him four

¹ TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. 10, cap. 14.

² *Ibid*,

wives, and taking off the robes which he had worn in imitation of their god, Tezcatlipuk, they clothed him in the handsomest dresses that a man amongst the Mexicans could wear.

For these twenty days he lived in all joy and felicity with his wives, and if there were any satirists in Mexico, it is probable that they pronounced these marriages to be the happiest ever known in that beautiful Venice of the western world; but if happy, a dreadful happiness it must have been. The five days before the Festival were spent in festivities in his honour, at which all the Mexican court were his companions, save the King himself, who alone stood apart, and kept his state.¹

But those days of fierce and transient felicity were now over; the procession was ended; then came a banquet; which also being concluded, the great event of the day took place. The poor youth came forward on the summit of the temple, and made a dignified bow to the assembled people, resuming his representation of the majesty of Tezcatlipuk. Behind him stalked five murdering ministers of sacrifice, who threw him upon the fatal stone, when the chief priest came forward with great reverence, opened the breast of the victim, and took out the heart.² The priests were wont to hurl down from the temple the bodies of the persons sacrificed, but on this occasion they carried it down with much submission and reverence to the last step of the temple. It was then beheaded; and, according to the narrative, the body, as some sacred thing, was cooked and divided amongst the Mexican lords.

Lastly, there was a solemn dance in which the youths dedicated to Tezcatlipuk took a part. The great lords joined in this dance,³ and thus the Festival was ended.

¹ "The five days before his time of death were spent in entertainments and banquets held in shady and beautiful places. During those days he was accompanied by a great concourse of lords and princes, being nearly all the court; but not by the King and Supreme Lord, who, keeping his dignity, stood apart."—TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. 10, cap. 14.

² "Then came the chief priest with great reverence, and opened the breast, took out the heart, and performed the usual ceremony with it."—TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. 10, cap. 14.

³ It is to be noted that this dance was celebrated in a place set apart

272 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

In ordinary years this poor devoted youth was the only person sacrificed; but every fourth year, which was considered a year of jubilee, several persons were added to the sacrifice.¹

Such were the proceedings, partly horrible, partly ludicrous, which took place every year in the month of Toxcatl, and for leave to celebrate which the Mexican lords asked permission from Pedro de Alvarado, who, in the absence of Cortes, was the chief in command, and who had been called by the Mexicans "Tonatiuh," "the sun-faced man," as he was of a ruddy complexion.

for that purpose ("En un lugar particular, y consagrado para este proposito"—TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. 10, cap. 14), and apparently not in the great court of the temple.

¹ It is not very important to settle which of two false gods was the one whose day of festival was chosen by Alvarado for his attack upon the Mexican nobles. Some of the best authorities represent this transaction to have occurred on the festival of Huitzilopochtli, the Mexican god of war. But they may have been deceived by following FR. BERNARDINO DE SAHAGUN, whose accuracy, as regards any historical fact, is not to be relied upon, and who, in the next sentence, makes a statement which is totally contrary to fact:—"Montezuma ordered that this festival should be held to give satisfaction to the Spaniards."—*Hist. Universal de las cosas de Nueva-España*. KINGSBOROUGH, *Collection*, vii, cap. 19.

Nearly the whole of the month of Toxcatl was devoted to religious festivals. The greatest festival, however, in the month, *and the one that came first*, was that in honour of Tezcatlipuk; and it seems to me almost inconceivable that Alvarado should have allowed this festival to be celebrated (in which there were large assemblages of people), and then that the Mexicans should have had occasion to ask permission for the holding of the second festival. The Mexican historian, IXTLILXOCHITL, merely describes the festival under the general head of Toxcatl ("While Cortes was at Vera Cruz, the Mexicans celebrated one of their principal festivals, called *Toxcatl*, which fell on Easter day."—*Hist. des Chichimèques*, cap. 88. TERNAUX-COMPANS, *Voyages*), which would correspond better to the festival of the Mexican Jupiter (Tezcatlipuk) than to that of the Mexican Mars. See TORQUEMADA, lib. 10, cap. 14.

In whatever way the question may be settled, and an alarming amount of learning might be expended upon it, I have preferred giving an account of the rites of the Mexican Jupiter in preference to those of the Mexican Mars, as the former are more curious and more significant.

In both cases there was a victim, a procession, and a solemn dance. The victim, however, in Jupiter's festival, was adored as a god during his year of preparation, while the victim to the god of war did not meet with that extraordinary honour.

Now Alvarado was a determined, rather than a wise man, and he was at present placed in very difficult circumstances, requiring both wisdom and forbearance. It was impossible but that the Mexicans must have exhibited a changed bearing towards the Spaniards since the time of their arrival, and especially since the departure of Cortes. The Mexicans had found out that the Spaniards were mortal; they had discovered that horses were but animals; they had ascertained by the coming of Narvacz that the Spaniards were not united. Their wrongs were manifest. They saw the Spaniards grow richer day by day. They probably discerned that the offer of Cortes to quit the country was a mere pretence. But that which was the indignity of indignities in their eyes was the deposition of their deities, and the elevation of what they would consider as the Spanish gods.

All these feelings would be more likely to be manifested, as the numbers of the Spaniards were diminished by the departure of Cortes; and it was a few days after that event, that some of the Spaniards began to discern or to imagine, that the Indians did not show them that respect and veneration which they had been accustomed to receive.¹ In truth, no respect or love can fulfil the requirements of fear; but I think that in this case, it was a just fear, and that revolt, if not already resolved upon, was imminent. The historian Herrera says that many Indian women declared to the truth of this conspiracy, and "that from women the truth is always learnt."² I do not know how that may be, but it is clear that throughout the conquest of America the Indian women several times betrayed their country under circumstances which do not seem to me to indicate so much a love of truth as a love of what is personal and near, and

¹ "A few days after some Spaniards began to notice that the Indians did not show them that respect and veneration to which they were accustomed before Cortes left Mexico."—*Monarquía Indiana*, lib. 4, cap. 66.

² "But the truth was that they intended to have killed the Spaniards, for which purpose they had hidden their arms in the houses near the temple; this was affirmed by many women, and from women the truth is always learnt."—HERRERA, *Hist. de las Indias*, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 8.

an indifference to what is abstract and remote,—a disposition which has been noted equally of all women in all countries. In a word, they loved their lovers, and did not care much about their country; and, accordingly, on several critical occasions, betrayed the one to the other with a recklessness which would be inexcusable in the other sex, but which is to be accounted for, as above, in them. If there had been Spanish women in the invading armies, the Indians might have had a chance of learning something from them; but, as it was, the betrayal was necessarily all on one side.

The hereditary enemies of Mexico, the Tlascalans, no doubt, did what they could to deepen the impressions made on the Spaniards by the changed demeanour of the Mexicans. They were at hand to magnify every ill report, and to counsel any and every act of violence.

Alvarado resolved to strike a great blow, and mindful, perhaps, of the proverb, “He who attacks conquers” (*Quien acomete vence*),¹ resolved to take advantage of the Tezcatlipuk Festival, to surprize and slay a great number of the Mexican nobility. It is quite probable that this Festival was looked upon by the Spanish Commander with great suspicion, and even that the demeanour of the Indians during the early days of the Festival (which of course was not explained till long after by the researches of learned men) served to increase the Spanish suspicions.²

I have no doubt that the horrid sacrifices in use among the Mexicans had made a deep impression on the Spanish soldiers; and that many a brave man, who would have faced death with unconcerned gallantry in the battlefield, had an extreme dread of being offered up as a sacrifice to the idols with the unpronounceable names. We may be sure that alarming rumours, which have even found their way into grave history, were loudly current then amongst the soldiers,—such as that the Indian women had their cooking vessels ready to boil the bodies of the Spaniards

¹ See BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 125.

² [Alvarado noticed many suspicious circumstances. After examining the temples and finding the remains of human sacrifices, as well as poles raised, he was told, to impale the Spaniards on, he seized and tortured some of the temple attendants until he obtained a confession.]

in.¹ In the affairs of life, what is said and what is thought are almost of more importance than what is done. Most histories are too wise, concerning themselves too much with what really happened, and not taking heed enough of the wild reports and rumours which were nearly as good as facts for the time they were believed in.

It is, therefore, no matter of surprize to hear that when the sacred dance,² above described as the closing ceremony of the feast to the Mexican Jupiter, was being celebrated, Alvarado's troops made an onslaught upon the weaponless Mexican lords, and slew no less than six hundred of them.³ This atrocity, as might have been expected, was the signal for an instant outbreak on the part of the populace. Alvarado was not skilled, like his master Cortes, in the art of creating and maintaining terror; but, indeed, the slightest knowledge of the world might have told him, that such a wholesale massacre, destroying the chief men, and, therefore, the restraining power over the Mexican populace, would, so far from quelling revolt, be likely to give it ample breathing room. The little garrison of Spaniards, instead of being masters of the town, were instantly in the condition of a distressed and besieged party, and it would have gone very hard with them, if Montezuma had not endeavoured to make his furious subjects desist from the attack.⁴

Such was the disastrous state of things communicated

¹ TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. 4, cap. 66.

² Some authors have supposed that this dance was the one which they called Macevalitzli, which means "reward with labour" (mercedimiento con trabajo). See GOMARA, *Crónica de Nueva-España*, cap. 104. BARCIA, *Historiadores*, tom. 2.

³ [The estimates of the number slain vary from four hundred to over three thousand. Alvarado had left half of his men at the palace, and while the great massacre was progressing they indulged in a minor one, killing all but fifteen or twenty of Montezuma's courtiers and attendants. The petition of Diego Velazquez in 1521, which is a long account of all these events (*Col. de Doc. Indé . . . del Arch. de Indias*), says 600 principal Indians and 5000 or 6000 of the commonalty.]

⁴ This is confirmed by three distinct authorities, each of great weight: BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 125; IXTLILXOCHITL, *Histoire de Chichimèques*, part 2, cap. 88 (TERNAUX-COMPANS, *Voyages*); and Cortes himself, LORENZANA, p. 131.

276 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

to Cortes in return for the tidings which he had sent to Mexico of his victory. Indeed, the life of Cortes was like a buoyant substance borne on a tumultuous sea: if it descended from the crest of one wave to the hollow of another, it did not remain depressed, but mounted up again; and, when the bystander turned to look, it was perhaps on the summit of a still higher and mightier wave than before. As may be imagined, he lost no time on this occasion in seeking to repair the evils which had befallen the Spanish arms in Mexico. He recalled the expeditions which he had sent out; he addressed the former followers of Narvaez, showing them that here was an opportunity for service both honourable and lucrative; and, the instant necessity for action being an immediate bond of union amongst brave men,¹ he forthwith commenced his march for the capital. At Tlascala, all was friendly to him; he there reviewed his men and found that they amounted to thirteen hundred soldiers, amongst whom were ninety-six horsemen, eighty cross-bowmen, and about eighty musketeers.² Cortes marched with great strides to Mexico, and entered the city at the head of this formidable force on the 24th of June 1520, the day of John the Baptist.

¹ "In this urgent necessity friends and enemies offered themselves with equal goodwill."—TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. 4, c. 67.

² Accounts vary very much about the number of these forces; the one adopted here is from Bernal Diaz. Cortes himself mentions but five hundred foot soldiers and seventy horsemen — (LORENZANA, p. 131); but it seems to me that this must be incorrect.

CHAPTER VIII

THE RECEPTION OF CORTES IN MEXICO—GENERAL ATTACK UPON
THE SPANISH QUARTERS—FLIGHT FROM MEXICO TO TLACUBA
—BATTLE OF OTUMBA—CORTES RETURNS TO TLASCALA.

VERY different was the reception of Cortes on this occasion from that on his first entry into Mexico, when Montezuma had gone forth with all pomp to meet him. Now, the Indians stood silently in the doorways of their houses, and the bridges between the houses were taken up.¹ Even when he arrived at his own quarters, he found the gates barred, so strict had been the siege, and he had to demand an entry. Alvarado appeared upon the battlements, and asked if Cortes came in the same liberty with which he went out, and if he was still their General. Cortes replied, "Yes," that he came with victory, and with increased forces. The gates were then opened, and Cortes and his companions entered. He had to hear the excuses of Alvarado for conduct which a prudent man like Cortes must have disapproved, but which he did not dare to punish then. His aspect was gloomy, and one who must have seen him that day, describes him by an epithet which, in the original meaning, was exceedingly applicable. Bernal Diaz says that Cortes was *mohino*, an adjective which is applied to one who plays in a game against many others.

The alternation of success and disappointment seems for once to have tried the equal temper and patient mind of the Spanish General. He sent a cold, or an uncourteous, message to Montezuma, the foolishness of which he seems afterwards to have been well aware of,

¹ "They saw that the bridges between the houses were taken up, and other bad signs."—HERRERA, *Hist. de las Indias*, tom. 2, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 8.

278 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

and, with the candour of a great man about his own errors, to have acknowledged.¹

At the moment, however, Cortes could give but little attention to anything but the pressing wants of the garrison. He lodged his own men in their old quarters, and placed in the great temple the additional forces he had brought with him. The next morning he sent out a messenger to Vera Cruz, probably with a view to ascertain how he would be received in the streets; but not more than half-an-hour had elapsed before the messenger returned, being wounded, and crying out that all the citizens were in revolt, and that the drawbridges were raised.

It appears likely, that before Cortes despatched this messenger, he had sent a threatening message to Montezuma, desiring him to give orders for the attendance of the people in the market-place, in order that the Spaniards might be able to buy provisions. Montezuma's reply was that he and the greater part of his servants were prisoners, and that Cortes should set free and send out whomsoever he wished to entrust with the execution of the necessary orders. Cortes chose for this purpose Montezuma's brother, the Lord of Iztapalapa; but when that Prince came among the citizens, his message was not listened to, and he was not permitted by the people to return, but was chosen as their leader.²

After the return of the messenger whom Cortes had sent out to Vera Cruz, the Mexicans advanced in great numbers towards the Spanish quarters, and commenced an attack upon them. Cortes, who was not at all given to exaggeration, says that neither the streets nor the terraced

¹ "Many have reported that they heard Cortes say that had he visited Montezuma as soon as he arrived, all would have gone well, and that he omitted it as undervaluing him, finding himself so strong."—HERRERA, *Hist. de las Indias*, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 8.

² [In his ignorance of tribal customs, Cortes did the absolutely worst thing possible in freeing Cuitlahuatzin. As long as Montezuma and his brother, who, according to custom, was next in succession, were both held prisoners, the Aztec resistance was paralyzed. As soon as Cuitlahuatzin was free, a rallying point against the Spaniards was at once provided.]

roofs (*azoteas*) were visible, being entirely obscured by the people who were upon them; that the multitude of stones was so great, that it seemed as if it rained stones; and that the arrows came so thickly, that the walls and the courts were full of them, rendering it difficult to move about. Cortes made two or three desperate sallies, and was wounded. The Mexicans succeeded in setting fire to the fortress, which was with difficulty subdued, and they would have scaled the walls at the point where the fire had done most damage, but for a large force of cross-bowmen, musketeers, and artillery, which Cortes threw forward to meet the danger. The Mexicans at last drew back, leaving no fewer than eighty Spaniards wounded in this first encounter.

The ensuing morning, as soon as it was daylight, the attack was renewed. There was no occasion for the artillerymen to take any particular aim, for the Mexicans advanced in such dense masses, that they could not be missed.¹ The gaps made in these masses were instantly filled up again; and practised veterans in the Spanish army, who had served in Italy, in France, and against the Grand Turk, declared that they had never seen men close up their ranks as these Mexicans did after the discharges of artillery upon them.² Again, and with considerable success, Cortes made sallies from the fortress in the course of the day; but at the end of it there were about sixty more of his men to be added to the list of wounded, already large, from the injuries received on the preceding day.

The third day was devoted by the ingenious Cortes to making three movable fortresses, called *mantas*, which, he thought, would enable his men, with less danger, to contend against the Mexicans on their terraced roofs.³

¹ "The artillerymen had no need to take aim, but only pointed the guns at the masses of Indians."—LORENZANA, p. 135.

² "Three or four of our men who had served in Italy swore over and over again that they had never seen such furious fighting in any wars between Christians, nor against the Grand Turk; nor had ever seen any people who so courageously closed up their ranks as these Indians did."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 126.

³ A private house in Mexico was often a little fortress in itself, and could not easily be destroyed.

Each of these little fortresses afforded shelter for twenty persons; and was manned with cross-bowmen, musketeers, pikemen, and labourers who carried pick-axes and bars of iron for piercing through the houses, and destroying the barricades in the streets. As may be imagined, the besiegers did not look on idly, and the combat did not cease while these machines were being made.

It was on this day that the unfortunate Montezuma either at the request of Cortes, or of his own accord, came out upon a battlement, and addressed the people. He was surrounded by Spanish soldiers, and was at first received with all respect and honour by his people. When silence ensued, he addressed them in very loving words, bidding them discontinue the attack, and assuring them that the Spaniards would depart from Mexico. It is not probable that much of his discourse could have been heard by the raging multitude. But, on the other hand, he was able to hear what their leaders had to say, as four of the chiefs approached near to him, and with tears addressed him, declaring their grief at his imprisonment. They told him that they had chosen his brother as their leader, that they had vowed to their gods not to cease fighting until the Spaniards were all destroyed, and that each day they prayed to their gods to keep him free and harmless. They added, that when their designs were accomplished, he should be much more their Lord than heretofore, and that he should then pardon them. Amongst the crowd, however, were doubtless men who viewed the conduct of Montezuma with intense disgust, or who thought that they had already shown too much disrespect towards him ever to be pardoned. A shower of stones and arrows interrupted the parley; the Spanish soldiers had ceased for the moment to protect Montezuma with their shields; and he was severely wounded in the head and in two other places. The miserable Monarch was borne away having received his death-stroke, but whether it came from the wounds themselves, or from the indignity of being thus treated by his people, remains a doubtful point. It seems, however, that, to use some emphatic words which have been employed upon a similar occasion, "He

turned his face to the wall and would be troubled no more."

It is remarkable that he did not die a Christian,¹ and I think this shows that he had more force of mind and purpose than the world has generally been inclined to give him credit for. To read Montezuma's character rightly, at this distance of time, and amidst such a wild perplexity of facts, would be very difficult, and is not very important. But one thing, I think, is discernible, and that is, that his manners were very gracious and graceful. I dwell upon this, because, I conceive, it was a characteristic of the race; and no one will estimate this characteristic lightly, who has observed how very rare, even in the centres of civilized life, it is to find people of fine manners, so that in great capitals but very few persons can be pointed out, who are at all transcendent in this respect. A cynical observer of modern times would probably contend that there are not now as many persons of highly polished manners in that great continent of America as there were in the year of our Lord 1520. The gracious delight which Montezuma had in giving was particularly noticeable;² and the impression which he made upon Bernal Diaz may be seen in the narrative of this simple soldier, who never speaks of him otherwise than as "the great Montezuma," and,

¹ I am not ignorant that it has been asserted that Montezuma received the rite of baptism at the hands of his Christian captors.—See Bustamante's notes on Chimalpain's translation of Gomara (*Historia de las Conquistas de Hernando Cortés*. CARLOS MARIA DE BUSTAMANTE. Mexico, 1826, page 287). But the objections raised by Torquemada—the silence of some of the best authorities, such as Oviedo, Ixtlilxochitl (*Histoire des Chichimèques*), and of Cortes himself; and, on the other hand, the distinctly opposing testimony of Bernal Diaz (see cap. 127), and the statement of Herrera, who asserts that Montezuma, at the hour of his death, refused to quit the religion of his fathers ("He did not wish to withdraw himself from the religion of his fathers."—*Hist. de las Indias*, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 10), convince me that no such baptism took place.

² "He was very generous and bountiful to the Spaniards, and, I believe as well, to his own followers; for if it had been from policy and not by nature it would have been seen easily in his face, because those who give against the will show it clearly in their aspect."—GOMARA, *Crónica de la Nueva-España*, cap. 170. BARCIA, *Historiadores*, tom. 2.

upon the occasion of his death, remarks that some of the Spanish soldiers who had known him mourned for him, as if he had been a father, "and no wonder," he adds, "seeing that he was so good."¹ Cortes sent out the body to the new King, and Montezuma was mourned over by the Spaniards, to whom he had always been gracious, and probably by his own people; but little could be learnt of what Mexicans thought, or did, upon the occasion, by the Spaniards, who only saw that Montezuma's death made no difference in the fierceness of the enemy's attack.

On the day in which Montezuma had addressed the people, Cortes had a conference with some of the opposing chiefs, who declared that the only basis on which they would treat, was that the Spaniards should quit the city; otherwise, they said, they themselves would all have to die, or to put an end to the Spaniards. Such a basis of peace not being at all acceptable to Cortes, he next tried the effect of the *mantas*. These were advanced against the walls of some of the *azoteas*, being well supported from behind by four cannon, by a party of Spanish cross-bowmen and common soldiers, and by three thousand of the Tlascalan allies. But all their efforts were without avail. As for the cavalry, it could do nothing, as the horses could not keep their footing for a moment on the polished tessellated pavement. Indeed, the numbers and the vigour of the enemy were so great, that the Spaniards could not gain a single step; on the contrary, they were obliged to give way, and the Indians occupied the square of the temple. There, five hundred of the principal persons, as they appeared to Cortes, posted themselves on the summit of the great temple: they were well-provisioned; and,

¹ "And some of our men who had known him and been intimate with him mourned for him as if he had been a father, and no wonder, seeing that he was so good."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 126.

[Montezuma had become very popular among the Spaniards from his liberality in distributing gold and other favours. To Bernal Diaz, who narrates this and other incidents, he presented a girl that Diaz desired. Cortes was said to have accepted two or three of Montezuma's daughters, but the conqueror always denied it. Through his daughters Montezuma's blood has intermingled with that of the nobility of Spain, and a descendant was wife of the Viceroy of Mexico in 1697.]

being close to the fortress, could do it much harm. The Spaniards made two or three attempts to take this position, but were driven back each time, and some were wounded. Cortes saw that it would be necessary for him to make the attempt in person; and, accordingly, though wounded, he resolved to do so. He had his shield bound on to his arm (the wound being in the left hand), and having placed some of his troops at the base of the temple, he commenced the difficult ascent. The Spaniards succeeded in gaining the summit, and, after a terrible combat, in dislodging the Mexicans from that height, and driving them down upon the lower terraces. Then might be seen, flitting about the contest, like some obscene and hideous birds of prey, the priests of the temple, with their long black veils streaming in the wind,—the blood flowing from their clotted hair and lacerated ears, as on a day of sacrifice,—now transported by wrath at the desecration of their shrines, now animated by the expectation of fresh victims, and throughout supported in their ecstasy by the hope of some great manifestation on the part of their false deities. But the Mexican god of war could not, even at this critical period of his and their existence, instruct his worshippers how to hurl down, at the right inclination, the large beams which they had carried up to the temple, and which, if justly aimed, would have fatally disconcerted the Spanish attack. The fight, which must have been one of the most picturesque on record, lasted three hours; and, to use the words of Bernal Diaz, “Cortes there showed himself to be a very valiant man, as he always was.”¹ The Spaniards lost forty men; but they succeeded

¹ BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 126. De Solis says that two patriotic Mexicans approached Cortes in an attitude of supplication, and then sprung upon him, and endeavoured to throw themselves downwards from the temple with him; but that Cortes burst from them and saved himself, while they were dashed to pieces on the pavement of the courtyard below. Upon this story Clavigero remarks, “The very humane gentlemen Raynal and Robertson, moved to pity, as it appears, by the peril of Cortes (*Gli umanissimi Signori Raynal, e Robertson mossi a pietà per quanto appare, pel pericolo de Cortès*) have provided some kind of unknown battlements and iron rails, by which he saved himself until he got clear of the Mexicans; but neither did the Mexicans ever make iron rails, nor had that temple any battlements. It is wonderful that these authors, so incredulous concerning what is attested by the Spanish

284 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

in putting every one of the Mexicans to the sword. We learn from the account of this battle something of the form of the temple. It appears that there were three or four terraces of some width, besides the main platform at the top.¹ Some of the Mexicans were hurled from the top of the temple to the bottom; others, again, as above described, were dislodged, and made a second stand upon one of these terraces. The difficulty of gaining the little tower, where the idols stood, was so great, that Cortes looks upon his success as owing to a special interposition of Providence.² The idols, it appears, had been reinstated; but the triumph of Huitzilopochtli and Tezcatlipuk was but of short duration; for Cortes set fire to these hideous images, and to the tower in which they had their abode. Certainly, the great temple was a place of ill-omen for the Mexicans to fight upon, and the blood of slaughtered thousands might well rise up to testify against them on that day.

This fight in the temple gave a momentary brightness to the arms of the Spaniards, and afforded Cortes an opportunity to resume negotiations. But the determination of the Mexicans was fixed and complete. It was in vain that the Spanish General pressed them to consider the havoc which he daily made amongst their citizens, and the injury he was doing to their beautiful city. They replied, that they were well aware of the mischief which the Spaniards were doing, and of the slaughter they were causing amongst the Mexican people; but, nevertheless, they were determined that they would all perish, if that were needful, to gain their point of destroying the

and Indian writers, should yet believe what is neither to be found among the ancient authors, nor probable in itself."—See CLAVIGERO, *Storia Antica del Messico*, tom. 3, lib. 9, p. 128; see also the English translation, ii, p. 108.

¹ "Fighting with them above until they were forced to jump down to a lower terrace surrounding it, one pace in width. The tower had three or four of these terraces, about sixteen feet one above the other."—LORENZANA, p. 138.

² "Your sacred Majesty may be assured that the capture of this tower was so difficult that if God had not assisted us, twenty of them could have resisted the ascent of a thousand men, although they fought very courageously, even unto death."—LORENZANA, p. 139.

Spaniards. They bade Cortes look at the streets, the squares, and the terraces, covered with people; and then, in a business-like and calculating manner, they told him that if twenty-five thousand of them were to die for each Spaniard, still the Spaniards would perish first.¹ They urged triumphantly that all the causeways were destroyed, and that the Spaniards had few provisions left, and very little water, so that they would die of hunger and thirst, if from nothing else. "In truth," says Cortes, "they had much reason in what they said, for if we had no other enemy to fight against but hunger, it was sufficient to destroy us all in a short time."

The conference ended in a discouraging manner for the Spaniards; but Cortes revived the spirits of himself and his men by a sally which he made at nightfall, and in which the Spaniards succeeded in burning more than three hundred houses. This, however, did but little good, as it only rendered three hundred families desperate.

The Mexicans had exaggerated the damage, when they spoke of all the causeways being destroyed. The one to Tlacuba,² though much injured, still remained. Indeed, in the course of the next day, when Cortes turned his whole attention in that direction, securing the bridges, and filling up the gaps that had been made, destroying the barricades, and burning the houses and towers which commanded this causeway, he succeeded in making it passable for that day; and with some of his men, absolutely did reach the tierra-firme, in a charge that they made upon the enemy. But the Mexicans redoubling their efforts, Cortes with difficulty regained the fortress; and, at the end of a day of continued fighting, the Mexicans claimed the victory, and had made themselves masters of several of the bridges.

It generally requires at least as much courage to retreat as to advance. Indeed, few men have the courage and the ready wisdom to retreat in time. But Cortes, once convinced that his position in Mexico was no longer

¹ "That if twenty-five thousand of them perished for every one of us we should still be finished with first."—LORENZANA, p. 139.

² [Or Tlacopan.]

286 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

tenable, wasted no time or energy in parleying with danger. Terror had lost its influence with the Mexicans, and superior strategy was of little avail against such overpowering numbers. Moreover, strategy, when there is hunger in the camp, is no longer uncontrolled in its movements, and is subject to other laws than those of the science which ought to guide it.

Cortes resolved to quit the city that night. His men had long wished for him to come to this conclusion; and an astrologer of the name of Botello, of whom it was said that he had a familiar spirit, had discovered by his divinations, and declared four nights before, that if they did not depart on that very night, no one of them would escape alive.

Preparations for departure were instantly commenced. A pontoon was constructed of wood, and intrusted to fifty Spanish soldiers and four hundred Tlascalans, the Spanish soldiers being all chosen men, bound by an oath to die rather than desert their pontoon. To convey the artillery, fifty Spanish soldiers and two hundred and fifty Tlascalans were appointed, while the prisoners, together with that important person, Donna Marina, were intrusted to an escort of three hundred Tlascalans and thirty Spanish soldiers.

The main divisions of the army were arranged as follows. The brave Sandoval was intrusted with the vanguard. The baggage, the prisoners, and the artillery were to come next. Pedro de Alvarado was to bring up the rear-guard, consisting in great part of the troops of Narvaez. Cortes, with a few horsemen and one hundred foot soldiers, was to assist in the passage of the centre of the army (of the weaker part in fact), and was to be at hand wherever the pressure of the battle might be greatest. The sick and the wounded were not forgotten: they were to be taken upon the cruppers of the horse-soldiers. Having made these dispositions, Cortes then brought out the gold. Seven wounded horses, one mare belonging to Cortes, and eighty Tlascalans, were laden with the King's fifths, or with what could be carried of them. After this had been done, Cortes bade the soldiers take what they liked of the rest of the gold; and woe to him who

encumbered himself with any! for, we are told, it was their destruction (*literally*, their "knife"),¹ and that he who took least gold, came best out of danger on this disastrous night.

A little before midnight the stealthy march began. The Spaniards succeeded in laying down the pontoon over the first bridge-way, and the vanguard with Sandoval passed over; Cortes and his men also passed over; but while the rest were passing, the Mexicans gave the alarm with loud shouts and blowing of horns. "Tlaltelulco,² Tlaltelulco!" they exclaimed, "come out quickly with your canoes: the *teules* are going, cut them off at the bridges." Almost immediately upon this alarm, the lake was covered with canoes. It rained, and the misfortunes of the night commenced by two horses slipping from the pontoon into the water. Then, the Mexicans attacked the pontoon-bearers so furiously, that it was impossible for them to raise it up again.³ In a very short time the water at that part was full of dead horses, Tlascalan men, Indian women, baggage, artillery, prisoners, and boxes (*petacas*) which, I suppose, supported the pontoon. On every side the most piteous cries were heard, "Help me! I drown!" "Rescue me! they are killing me!" Such vain demands were mingled with prayers to the Virgin Mary and to Saint James. Those that did get up upon the bridge and on the causeway, found bands of Mexican warriors ready to push them down again into the water.

At the second bridge-way a single beam was found,

¹ "That each man might take what he would of the treasure, which proved a knife to him who did so, for he who took least escaped best."—HERRERA, *Hist. de las Indias*, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 11.

[The men who had come with Narvaez took most, and Cortes is said to have helped himself very freely. It will be remembered that these Narvaez men had been tempted to join Cortes by promises of plenty of gold, plenty of slaves, and "the life of a lord." From the moment of their arrival at Mexico they had been fighting for their lives, and were now, most of them, to lose their lives, but Fate with its usual ironical deference to human prayers gave them for an hour plenty of gold.]

² Tlaltelulco was the quarter of the town where the market was situated.

³ [It had become immovable from the weight of troops, baggage, and artillery passing over it.]

288 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

which doubtless had been left for the convenience of the Mexicans themselves. This was useless for the horses; but Cortes diverging, found a shallow place where the water did not reach further than up to the saddle, and by that he and his horsemen passed (as Sandoval must have done before). He contrived, also, to get his foot-soldiers safely to the main-land, though whether they swam or waded, whether they kept the line of the causeway, or diverged into the shallows, it is difficult to determine. Leaving the vanguard and his own division safe on shore, Cortes with a small body of horse and foot, returned to give what assistance he could to those who were behind him. All order was now lost, and the retreat was little else than a confused slaughter, although small bodies of the Spaniards still retained sufficient presence of mind to act together, rushing forward, clearing the space about them, making their way at each moment with loss of life, but still some few survivors getting onwards. Few, indeed, of the rear-guard could have escaped. It is told as a wonder of Alvarado, that, coming to the last bridge, he made a leap, which has by many been deemed impossible, and cleared the vast aperture.¹ When Cortes came up to him, he was found accompanied only by seven soldiers, and eight Tlascalans, all covered with blood from their many wounds. They told Cortes that there was no use in going further back, that all who remained alive were there with them. Upon this the General turned; and the small and melancholy band of Spaniards pushed on to Tlacuba, Cortes protecting the rear. It is said that he sat down on a stone in a village called Popotla near Tlacuba, and wept; a rare occurrence, for he was not a man to waste any energy in weeping while aught remained to be done. The country was aroused against them, and they did not rest for the night till they had fortified themselves in a temple on a hill near Tlacuba,

¹ [The place of Alvarado's leap is still shown to the traveller in Mexico, but the story is now disbelieved on the evidence of his *Residencia* discovered recently. According to that he escaped across a beam and was accused of deserting his men, and he does not seem to have disputed the fact (Prescott's *Mexico*, ed. Kirk, 1878, p. 405).]

where afterwards was built a church dedicated, very appropriately, to Our Lady of Refuge (*á Nuestra Señora de los Remedios*).

This memorable night has ever been celebrated in American history as *la noche triste*. In this flight from Mexico all the artillery was lost, and there perished four hundred and fifty¹ Spaniards, amongst whom was Velazquez de Leon, one of the principal men in the expedition and a relation of the Governor of Cuba, four thousand of the Indian allies, forty-six horses, and most of the Mexican prisoners, including one son and two daughters of Montezuma, and his nephew the King of Tezcuco. A loss which posterity will ever regret was that of the books and accounts, memorials and writings, of which there were some, it is said, that contained a narrative of all that had happened since Cortes left Cuba.² The wisdom of the astrologer Botello did not save him (but what wise man is ever wise for himself!); and that any Spaniard remained alive seems to infer some negligence on the part of the Mexican conquerors.

The error of the Spaniards, if error there were, was in taking only one pontoon.³ The main error of the Mexicans was in not occupying the ground where the Spaniards would have to land, and in concentrating their forces at the bridges where there was not room for more than a certain number of them to act, and where they incommoded each other. The summary of the retreat I believe to be this: that the passage of the first bridge was successfully made, through means of the pontoon, by a large portion of the most serviceable persons in the little army,

¹ Bernal Diaz estimates the number of Spaniards lost at eight hundred and seventy; Oviedo at eleven hundred and seventy. I have adopted in the text the numbers given by Gomara, but should not be surprised if they were proved to be understated.

² "The account books and records of the royal revenue, and the memorials and writings relating to all that had happened since Cortes left Cuba."—TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. 4, cap. 71.

[The royal fifth of treasure was lost, but not, it was said, that belonging to Cortes.]

³ "Had they carried three bridges instead of one, few of them had perished."—HERRERA, *Hist. de las Indias*, tom. 2, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 11.

290 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

but that, even at that first point, there was great loss of life amongst the weaker portion, and of baggage, and artillery: that between the first bridge and the second there was almost a total destruction of the weaker, less mobile, and more laden part of the Spanish force: that, at the second bridge, by means of that beam which was fortunately there, a good number of those who would be called *suellos*, active and skilful persons, and who were favoured by being in a forward position, contrived to pass; but that neither baggage, artillery, prisoners, nor men laden with bars of gold, ever passed that second fatal aperture: and, for the third, it seems to me that it could have been passed by those only who were able to swim, or who, having by chance diverged into a shallower part, waded through the water, and rejoined the causeway near the main-land. In the annals of retreats there has seldom been one recorded which proved more entirely disastrous. It occurred on the 1st of July 1520.¹

From Tlacuba Cortes moved on towards the province of Tlascala, always fighting his way, and always encumbered with enemies. The night before he reached a certain valley, soon to be made celebrated by him, called the valley of Otumba, considering that every day the Spaniards were growing weaker² and the enemy becoming bolder and more numerous, he bethought him of a device, or, as he expresses it, the Holy Spirit enlightened him with advice,³ in reference to the manner of carrying the sick and wounded. They had hitherto been carried on horseback behind the fighting men, but he now caused litters to be constructed for them. This, at any moment of danger or difficulty, would give much more freedom of action to his cavalry. The next morning, the Spaniards had not proceeded two leagues before they found

¹ Bernal Diaz says that it occurred on the 10th of July; but this is contradicted by a date which Cortes gives in his letter, when, speaking of the day after the battle of Otumba, he says that it was a Sunday, the 8th of July.—(LORENZANA, p. 149.)

² [The Spaniards were more than half starved. When a horse died not a fragment was left, "skin or bone," says Gomara.]

³ "The Holy Ghost inspired me with this precaution."—LORENZANA, p. 148.

themselves surrounded by such a number of Indians that, as Cortes says, neither in front, nor in the rear, nor on the flanks, could any part of the plain be seen which was not covered by these Indians. Cortes and his men thought that this would be the last day of their lives. The battle raged for a long time, and was of that confused character, that fighting, or fleeing, or discerning whether they were victorious or defeated, was almost equally difficult for either party. It was one of those battles not admitting of large manœuvres, and of which each soldier engaged has afterwards a different story to tell. Conspicuous in the ranks of the enemy was their General, with his outspread flag, his rich armour of gold, and his plumes of silver feathers. Towards this glittering centre Cortes and his best captains, after the fight had lasted some time, directed their attack; and Cortes himself bore down the Mexican General to the ground. The Mexicans, seeing their General slain, fled; and in this manner the celebrated battle of Otumba was gained by the Spaniards. The description which Cortes gives of the main incident in it is very characteristic of him, from the modesty and simplicity with which it is given. His own words are these:—"And we went fighting in that toilsome manner a great part of the day, until it pleased God that there was slain a person amongst the enemy who must have been the General; for with his death the battle altogether ceased."

After the victory the Spaniards proceeded with much less fear and less harassment, although, to use the graphic expression of Cortes, the enemy still continued biting them (*mordiendo*), until they reached a small country house where they encamped for the night. From that spot they could perceive certain sierras in the territory of Tlascala, a most welcome sight to their eyes, although Cortes, who knew mankind well, was thoroughly aware of the difference of reception that they might meet with now that they came, not as prosperous men and conquerors, but as poor men and fugitives. The next day they entered the province of Tlascala, and rested in a Tlascalan town three days. There, the principal Tlascalan Lords came to see them, and, instead

292 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

of showing any coldness or unkindness, they laboured to console Cortes in his misfortune. "Oh! Malinché, Malinché," they said, "how it grieves us to hear of your misfortunes, and of those of all your brothers, and of the multitude of our own men who have perished with yours. Have we not told you many times, that you should not trust in those Mexican people, for there was no security from one day to another that they would not make war upon you, and you would not believe us? But now the thing is done, and nothing more remains at present but to refresh you and to cure you. Wherefore, we will go immediately to our city, where you shall be lodged as it may please you." With these words, and words like these, of noble kindness, their good allies brought the Spaniards to the chief city of Tlascala, which they reached about the middle of July 1520.

CHAPTER IX

RESOLUTION OF THE TLASCALAN SENATE—CORTES IN TEPEACA
—FORMS A GREAT ALLIANCE AGAINST THE MEXICANS—
PREPARES TO MARCH AGAINST MEXICO—REVIEWS HIS
TROOPS AT TLASCALA

RETREATING, wounded, despoiled, having lost numbers of his own men, and the greater part of his allied troops, almost any other commander but Cortes would have been thoroughly cast down. Not so, this modern Cæsar, who only meditated to refresh himself by new combats. That section, however, of his men who had been the followers of Narvaez, and probably some of the others, did not share in the ardour of their chief. On the contrary, they counselled an instant march to Vera Cruz, before their present allies, uniting with their enemies, should occupy the passes between the town of Tlascala and the sea. If Cortes had an intention of resuming the war with Mexico, their present repose, they thought, would but fatten them for sacrifice. Such was the common discourse, and such, indeed, were the representations which they made to Cortes himself. Moreover, when he did not give way to their suggestions, they drew up a formal requisition, in which they stated their loss of men, their want of horses, weapons, and ammunition, and upon these statements required him to march to Vera Cruz. The reply of Cortes to this requisition has been made for him by two considerable historians;¹ but as they did not write in concert, the speeches have not the slightest resemblance.² In the one speech, he is made to allude

¹ OVIEDO and GOMARA.

² May that man who invented fictitious speech-making in history yet have to listen to innumerable speeches from dull men accustomed to address courts of law, or legislative assemblies! I wish him no further punishment, though he has been a most mischievous person to the human race.

294 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

to Xenophon, and to quote "*Vegetius De Re Militari*"; in the other (the chaplain's account), the deeds of Jonathan and David are brought in by way of illustration. Cortes himself, who always speaks simply, tells the Emperor, that recollecting how fortune favours the brave (*que siempre á los osados ayuda la fortuna*),—a proverb which he acted out so nobly, that of all men of his time he had most right to quote it; and also reflecting that any symptom of pusillanimity would bring down the Indians upon them, both friends and enemies, more quickly than anything else; and also considering, that he and his men were Christians, and that God "would not permit" that they should altogether perish, and that such a great country should be lost,—he determined on no account to descend towards the sea.¹ Accordingly, he told his men that to quit the country would not only be shameful to him, and dangerous to all of them, but also treasonable to the King's service.

It is clear that Cortes was supported by a considerable section of his own men. Such is the statement of Bernal Diaz; and it is evident to me that this soldier-historian, for one, did not join with those who presented the afore-said requisition, as, if he had accompanied the malcontents, instead of proving that there were certain gross errors in the statements which Gomara puts into the mouth of Cortes, he would, I think, have asserted that the speech was altogether a fabrication. The truth is, that the men of Narvaez were of a richer class than the men of Cortes, and were much less compromised in his doings. Indeed, they taunted the others by saying that these had nothing but their persons to lose; while they maintained that the desire to command was that which induced Cortes himself to persevere.²

¹ [Mr. H. H. Bancroft comments on the Cortes letters or despatches (quoted here under the reference LORENZANA):—"The simplicity and energy of the style lend an air of truth to the statements . . . but it requires little study of the reports to discover that they are full of calculated mis-statements, both direct and negative, made whenever he considered it best for his interest to conceal disagreeable and discreditable facts or to magnify the danger and the deed."]

² "And they continued that Cortes only wanted to command and

Meanwhile, as great, if not a greater, danger threatened Cortes from another quarter. The Mexicans sent ambassadors to the government of Tlascala with a present of garments, feathers, and salt.¹ These ambassadors, being admitted into the Tlascalan senate, referred to the identity of lineage, laws, and language between the Mexicans and the Tlascalans; spoke of their ancient enterprizes in arms together, and of a friendship between the two nations which had been broken by a question of religion;² and then said, that it would be well that the present state of hostility should be put an end to, and that the Tlascalans should not be deprived of those productions which abounded in the Mexican Empire. This last argument was an allusion to the commerce in salt, of which the patriotic Tlascalans had long deprived themselves. The Mexican ambassadors added, that, in order that the two nations might come to terms, it would be necessary that these few Christians should be sacrificed, with whom their gods were very angry. Finally, the Mexicans concluded by saying (which was the most effective appeal they could make), that the Spaniards would insult the Tlascalans as they had insulted them.³ The senate received the presents, and said that they would consider the matter. The ambassadors having left the Audience Chamber, the debate began. The chief speakers were Maxitcatzin⁴ (sometimes called by

be master, and we others who came with him and clung to him had nothing to lose but our lives."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 129.

¹ [The Mexicans also endeavoured to obtain the assistance of Michoacan, a powerful independent kingdom on the Pacific side of Mexico.]

² "That then a religious question had disturbed their friendship, and from it had resulted the discords that had followed."—IXTLILXOCHITL, *Hist. des Chichimèques*, cap. 90.

This record of a religious difference between the two nations deserves attention from the student of pre-Spanish American history, and might lead to some curious and important discovery.

³ "That the Spaniards would do the same injuries to them unless they looked to themselves."—TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. 4, cap. 75.

⁴ These uncouth Mexican names were, I have no doubt, much softer and more tolerable than they appear. In this name, for instance, the last syllable "tzin," is a title of honour, and that the rest of the name was pronounced much more softly than it was written, may be con-

the Spaniards Magiscatzin) and Xicotencatl the younger (*el mozo*); the former always friendly to the Spaniards, the latter their determined enemy. It was a great debate, in which much was to be said on both sides. Honour and faith were with Maxitcatzin, and perhaps even the balance of policy was in his favour; but much was to be said upon the other side, and with all their courtesy, it must not be supposed but that the Tlascalans had felt very deeply the total loss of that part of their army which had accompanied the Spaniards to Mexico, and the disgrace of the flight. Some reproaches, even, had been addressed to the Spaniards upon this point;¹ though, no doubt, these had been uttered only, or chiefly, by people of the lower classes. Xicotencatl maintained that it would be better to enter into the Mexican confederacy, and to uphold their ancient customs, than to learn the new ones of this stranger people, an indomitable race, who wished to have the command in everything. "Now was the time," he said, "to adopt this counsel, when the Spaniards were routed and dispirited."

It is probable, as often happens in difficult dilemmas, that neither counsel would have been prosperous, or sufficed to save the Tlascalans, for, as the Spanish faction amongst them asserted, the Mexicans would never have forgiven them for having in the first instance received and favoured the Spaniards. Still, however little chance of escape by wisdom there was for the Tlascalans, it is seldom, in this history, that a more momentous council had been held; for certainly if the Tlascalan senate had gone with Xicotencatl the younger, the Spanish Conquest must have been deferred, and might have taken place under very different auspices. The debate waxed warm; so warm, indeed, that Maxitcatzin struck his opponent, who was precipitated down a flight of stairs, the debate having been held in an oratory. A miraculous turn has been given to the story, such as that a cloud was seen to

jectured from the corruption of the name which appears in Bernal Diaz, namely, "Masse Escaci."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 129.

[Mr. H. H. Bancroft gives *Amatlacuiloliticcatlaxtlahuilli* as one Aztec word.]

¹ TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. 4, cap. 75.

enter the room and rest upon a cross which was there, and that the members of the council were influenced by this miraculous interposition.¹ We need not, however, depreciate the generous disposition of the Tlascalans by summoning to its aid any miraculous interference. They admired their allies, the Spaniards; they had fought side by side with them; they were willing to share their reverses, and to throw in their lot with that of these skilful and enduring strangers. In a word, the counsel of Maxitcatzin prevailed, and, though they knew it not, the fate of the Tlascalans was therein decided also; and their great city, with its numerous population, was to dwindle away under the shade of their engrossing allies, until it should become, as in our time, a petty country town.²

It was, perhaps, from policy, perhaps from a grand politeness, which is to be noticed amongst these Indians, that Maxitcatzin did not mention to Cortes anything about this Mexican embassy. The intelligence, however, reached his ear, it is said, from other quarters; and,

¹ "This debate took place in Xicotencatl's hall of prayer in which a cross had been set up. All those who were present saw a cloud form which covered the cross, and the whole of the room remained in obscurity. Maxitcatzin, seeing this miracle, felt the courage and ardour with which he defended the Christians augment to such a degree that he energetically combated the younger Xicotencatl who hotly maintained his father's views. They came to blows: Maxitcatzin struck him so violently that he threw him to the bottom of the steps at the entrance of the hall. All the members of the assembly, witnessing so great a miracle, were awed, and adopted the opinion of Maxitcatzin."—IXTLIXOCHITL, *Histoire des Chichimèques*, cap. 90. TERNAUX-COMPANS, *Voyages*.

² "The ancient numerous population of Tlascala is no longer found within its limits, and perhaps not more than four or five thousand individuals now inhabit it. But the town is, nevertheless, handsome;—its streets are regular; its private houses, town hall, bishop's palace, and principal church, are built in a style of tasteful architecture, while on the remains of the chief Teocalli (temple) of the ancient Tlascalans, a Franciscan convent has been built, which is perhaps one of the earliest ecclesiastical edifices in the Republic. In the town itself and in its vicinity many relics and ruins of the past glory of Tlascala are still found by antiquarians, but they have hitherto been undisturbed by foreign visitors, and remain unnoticed by the natives."—BRANTZ MAYER'S *Mexico, Aztec, Spanish, and Republican*, ii, lib. 5, cap. 4. Hartford, U.S., 1852.

298 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

curiously enough, the rival chieftain Xicotencatl, seeing that it was useless to oppose Cortes, came and offered his services to him in an expedition which Cortes now proposed to make against Tepeaca, a country lying southward, the inhabitants of which were inimical to the Tlascalans, and also to Cortes, having intercepted and slain ten or twelve Spaniards who were coming from Vera Cruz to Mexico. These Tepeacans, moreover, were allies of the Mexicans.

The engaging Cortes proved equally successful with his own men as with the Tlascalans. The men of Narvaez murmured, but they went; and Cortes, on quitting Tlascala, which he did at the end of twenty-two days after his return to that city, found himself at the head of a large army, amounting to no less than one hundred and fifty thousand men. Amongst these the Cholulans were to be found as allies.

The world is too old, and there is too little time now, for listening to a minute account of the fate of any province or nation which has not contrived to make itself known for anything but its disasters. We cannot, therefore, do more than say that Tepeaca was swiftly subdued, that the people in that part of the country where the Spaniards had been intercepted, were made slaves, Cortes alleging that they were cannibals, and also that he wished to terrify the Mexicans,—enouncing at the same time a favourite doctrine of his, namely, that the people were so numerous, that unless a “great and cruel chastisement” were made amongst them, they would never be amended.¹ He also founded a town called Segura de la Frontera in the district of Tepeaca.²

For the reason above given, it will be needless to enter into all the wars and forays that Cortes undertook at this

¹ “Because, besides having killed the said Spaniards and rebelled against Your Majesty’s service, they are all eaters of human flesh, a fact so notorious that I have not sent Your Majesty any proof of it. I was moved also to make slaves of them to strike the Culuans with dread, and because the population is so large that unless a great and cruel punishment is inflicted on them they will never be amended.”—LORENZANA, p. 154.

² [“In the town named Segura de la Frontera, formerly called Tepeaca.”]

GREAT ALLIANCE AGAINST MEXICO 299

period. Suffice it to say, that wherever he met the Mexican troops, he routed them, conquering also their allies, and receiving the conquered provinces into the friendship and under the vassalage of the King of Spain. It is observable that the towns and fortresses were well built. Of a town, for instance, called Yzzucán, Cortes says, "It is very well arranged in its streets, and has a hundred temples."¹ Of Guacachula he says, "It is surrounded by a strong wall twenty feet high, with a battlement two feet and a half high. It had four entrances, so constructed, that the walls overlapped one another."² Again, of the provinces of Zuzula and Tama-zula, Cortes mentions, that they were thickly populated, and the houses better built than any that the Spaniards had seen elsewhere in the New World.³ It is necessary to remark these things, as otherwise the reader might imagine that Mexico, as it was the central point of the Conquest, was the only centre of civilization; whereas, a certain kind of well-being, and some knowledge of the arts of life, were spread over a considerable portion of America, and might be traced, indeed, from a point further south than Cusco, in Peru (following the Andes, the spinal column of that great continent), to California.

The result of the exertions of Cortes at this period, namely, from July to December in the year 1520, was to form a great defensive and offensive alliance against the Mexicans, and to render an attack upon that country, not merely a splendid and chivalrous attempt, but an enterprize entirely consistent with the rules of that prudence, into which the valour of Cortes was welded as the blade of the sword is to its handle.

This enterprize Cortes had, probably, never abandoned for one single moment. To the Emperor he emphatically

¹ "The city of Yzzucán contains about three or four thousand households, its streets and markets well laid out; it had a hundred temples and oratories strongly built with towers, all of which were burnt." [Now the town of Matamoros.]—LORENZANA, p. 164.

² "At each entrance there are three or four turns in the wall doubling on one another, and each of these turns has a breastwork on it for fighting."—LORENZANA, p. 162.

³ LORENZANA, p. 162.

300 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

says, "My determined resolution was to return upon the men of that great city." ¹ Accordingly, he had not devoted all his energies to gaining or subduing provinces more or less obscure, but had bethought him of what would certainly be requisite in any attack to be made upon Mexico. He had despatched, for instance, four ships (the same that had been sent out under the command of Narvaez to subdue him) to Hispaniola for horses—he wisely puts those animals first—men, arms, and ammunition. Then, with still more forethought, he had given orders for brigantines to be constructed in separate pieces at Tlascala, and over this work he had placed a skilful artificer, named Martin Lopez. He had written to the King, detailing the events which had befallen him, and the plans which he cherished; and, in a word, he had neglected nothing which would conduce to the success of his great undertaking. ²

It remains to be seen, what, in the meanwhile, the Mexicans, who also were not the men to fold their arms while they were on the eve of battle, had done on their side to meet their vigorous and determined enemy. They, too, had sought to make and to strengthen alliances; and their diplomatic efforts had not been so unsuccessful in other places as they had proved in Tlascala. They had sought to secure their tributaries, not by harshness, but by the remission of one year's tribute, on condition that they should wage unceasing war against the Spaniards. In their own vicinity, the Mexicans prepared walls, entrenchments, and fosses; and they fabricated a new kind of arms,—long lances, especially destined to repel the cavalry of their opponents.

It had not been permitted to the Mexicans to devote their time and energies to the future alone. Already, they had had much to contend against, for even when

¹ LORENZANA, p. 178.

² [Letters also went from the council and from the army to the Emperor, highly praising Cortes, ascribing all the disasters to the interference of Narvaez and Velazquez, and begging that any privileges granted to the latter should be withdrawn. The army letter was signed by 534 Spaniards.]

they had got rid of Cortes and his men, they had still two terrible enemies within their city, civil discord and contagious disorder.¹ We learn from the Indian authorities,² that immediately after the Spaniards had fled from Mexico, a great contention arose between those Mexicans who had at all befriended the Spaniards, and the rest of the townsmen. In the combats which then took place, two of Montezuma's sons perished.³

In the meanwhile, Cortes, having subdued the provinces adjacent to La Segura, was willing to allow some of the men of Narvaez to return to Cuba, on the ground, as he informed his own partizans, "that it was better to be alone than ill-accompanied."⁴ Previously, however, to their departure, a division was made of that part of the spoil which consisted of slaves; and the proceedings in this matter deserve special attention. These slaves were first collected together, and then branded with the letter "G," which signified *guerra* (war). A fifth was taken for the King; then, another fifth for Cortes; and the rest were divided amongst the men. We naturally picture to our minds, when reading of slaves of war, that they were strong men, who, having come out to fight, had been conquered by stronger or more valiant men, and that the penalty of defeat was servitude,—a transaction which does not shock us much, especially in an age, comparatively speaking, barbarous. But, in this

¹ [Pamphilo Narvaez brought over small-pox with him from Cuba. Cuitlahuatzin, who had done so much to retrieve Montezuma's blunders, was one of the first victims. The general mortality is said to have been appalling. Cuitlahuatzin was succeeded by Quauhtemotzin, a nephew of Montezuma, who married Montezuma's only legitimate daughter in order to strengthen his position.]

² "It says in a memoir in my possession written by an Indian who saw the Conquest, and who afterwards became a Christian and learned to read and write, that as soon as the Spaniards left the city great quarrels arose among the Mexicans."—TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indias*, lib. 4, cap. 73.

³ This is confirmed, incidentally, to a certain extent, in the conversation which Montezuma's son-in-law, Johan Cano, had with Oviedo (*Hist. de las Indias*, lib. 33, cap. 54, p. 549), though Cano throws the blame upon the new Monarch of having ordered the death of one of Montezuma's sons.

⁴ BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 136.

case, and, doubtless, in many others, we should have been much astonished if the slaves had been paraded before us, seeing that they consisted of boys, girls, and young women, for the Spanish soldiers would not make slaves of the men, because they were so troublesome to guard; and, besides, the Spaniards had already, in their Tlascalan friends, men who were ready to do any hard work for them.¹

The Spanish soldiers were very much dissatisfied with the mode of division adopted by Cortes. They had brought together to the marking-house their private spoil of human beings; they had even begun to civilize their female captives by clothing them;² and now, after the King and Cortes, and, probably, the other great officers, had taken their share of the spoil, there were no women left but those who were feeble and aged (*davan nos las veijas y ruinas*). The soldiers were very angry. "Were there two kings in the land?" they exclaimed. When these murmurings reached Cortes, he endeavoured to appease the men, addressing them mildly, and swearing by his conscience (a favourite oath of his), that, henceforth, the slaves should be sold by auction.³

These important affairs having been settled, Cortes quitted La Segura in the middle of December 1520, to return to Tlascala. On his road, he stopped at Cholula, where the people much desired his arrival, as many of their chiefs were dead, and they wished him to nominate others in their place, which he consented to do.

This transaction is notable, as it shows in what high esteem Cortes was held by the natives; but it is also

¹ "Every man brought the boys and young women he had taken, grown-up men being no use to us, as they were difficult to guard and not necessary for our service, having the Tlascalans for friends."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 135.

² "They had given them chemises and petticoats."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 135.

³ [I do not know whether Juan Bono, the hero of the descent upon Trinidad at the beginning of this volume, presents himself again here, but Bernal Diaz says: "A certain Juan Bono, who was also loud in his complaints, added that such proceedings should not be permitted in New Spain, and that he would send information of them to His Majesty."]

EUROPEAN DISEASES INTRODUCED 303

far more notable, on account of the disease of which these chiefs had perished. A black man in the troop of Narvaez had fallen ill of the small-pox, and from him the infection rapidly spread throughout New Spain, and became an important element in the subjugation of the country. It has been maintained, and with some likelihood, that this was the first introduction of that terrible disease into the Continent of America, and that the natives, being unaccustomed to deal with it, and resorting to bathing as a means of cure, perished in great numbers.¹ There is also another theory which has been maintained in modern times, and which would account for the fatality of this disease amongst the Indians, whether it were newly introduced or not. This theory is, that the diseases of a strong people have a strength which cannot be fought against by a weaker people. Had the small-pox been bred amongst the Indians themselves, they would, it is contended, have been able to make a better resistance to it; but coming from the Spaniards through this negro (also of a stronger race than the Indians), the new recipients were not able to make head against it. However this may be (and such questions are very interesting for the physiologist), it is certain that the arrival of Narvaez and his men, affording at first a bright gleam of hope to the Mexicans, was deeply injurious to them in three ways: in the generation of this fatal disease; in the addition made to the forces of Cortes; and in his compelled absence from Mexico, at a most critical period, when the hopes of the Mexicans and the cruel folly of Alvarado led to that outbreak which was the distinct and direct cause of the future disasters of that kingdom.

From Cholula Cortes moved on to his friendly Tlascalans, amongst whom he was received with every demonstration of joy,—with triumphal arches, dances, songs, and waving of banners. But there was sad news for him in the death,

¹ [There does not appear to be any record of the introduction of the Plague into America, although that scourge was endemic in Europe, and especially in Spain, during these centuries. Even the fatal Yellow Fever was not noticed, at any rate in its malignant form, until the middle of the seventeenth century.]

by the prevalent disease, of his faithful friend and adherent, Maxitcatzin. Cortes put on mourning for this Chief, and, at the request of the State, appointed his son, a youth of twelve or thirteen years of age, to succeed him. He also made the boy a knight, and had him baptized, naming him "Don Juan Maxitcatzin."

The day after Christmas Day (the 26th of December 1520), Cortes reviewed his troops, and found that they consisted of forty horsemen and five hundred and fifty foot soldiers, eighty of whom were either cross-bowmen or musketeers. He had also eight or nine cannon, but very little powder. He formed his horsemen into four divisions, and his foot-soldiers into nine. He then addressed them saying, that they knew how they and he, to serve His Sacred Majesty, the Emperor, had made a settlement in that country, and how the inhabitants of it had acknowledged their vassalage to His Majesty, continuing to act for some time as such vassals, receiving good offices from the Spaniards, and returning such offices to them. How, without any cause (such are his words, and we may well wonder what had become of that conscience which he was wont to swear by, when he uttered them), the inhabitants of Mexico and of all the provinces subject to them, had not only rebelled against His Majesty, but had killed many friends and relations of the Spaniards there present, and had driven them out of the land. He then passed to the main point of his discourse,—namely, that the Spaniards should return upon their former steps and regain that which they had lost. He advanced the following reasons for the prosecution of the war with Mexico; first, that it was a war for the furtherance of the Faith, and against a barbarous nation; secondly, that it was for the service of His Majesty; thirdly, for the security of their own lives: and then he brought forward as a topic, not so much in the way of reason as of encouragement, the alliances which the Spaniards had secured in aid of this their great enterprize. He afterwards told them that he had made certain ordinances for the government of the army, which he begged them carefully to observe.¹

¹ "That no one should blaspheme the Holy Name of God."

REVIEW OF THE NATIVE ALLIES 305

He received a suitable reply from his men, who declared that they were ready to die for the Faith, and for the service of His Majesty; that they would recover what was lost, and take vengeance for the "treason" which the Mexicans and their allies had committed against them.

The ordinances were proclaimed by sound of trumpet, and the Spaniards returned to their quarters.

The next day the Tlascalans had their review, and, as these were the allies whom Cortes greatly relied upon, it will be well to give an account of the review, especially as it comes to us on the authority of an historian, who had access to the papers of the Spanish officer intrusted with all the arrangements connected with these allies.

First of all came the military musicians: then the four Lords of the four quarters of the city, magnificently arrayed after their fashion. They were adorned with a rich mass of plumage¹ which rose from their shoulders a yard in height, and towered above their heads; precious stones hung from their ears and from their thick lips; their hair was bound by a band of gold or silver; on their feet there were splendid *cotaras*.

Behind these chiefs came four pages bearing their bows and arrows.² They themselves carried swords (*macanas*)³

"That the Spaniards should not quarrel among themselves.

"That no one should stake arms or horse at play.

"That women should be respected.

"That no one should plunder or capture Indians or make forays without the licence and consent of the chiefs.

"That no one should harm the friendly fighting Indians nor use them as carriers."—GOMARA, *Crónica de la Nueva-España*, cap. 119. BARCIA, *Historiadores*, tom 2.

[These and other ordinances were proclaimed 22nd December 1520. The introduction declares them to be the more necessary "as having for enemies the most warlike and cunning people ever known."]

¹ Those who are familiar with engravings representing the ruins of the ancient American temples will have no difficulty in recognising this head-dress. It furnishes another proof that these temples were built by men of this race.

² TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. 4, cap. 81.

³ These swords were made of wood, but probably had sharp facets made of flint or of obsidian, and might be made to inflict a very ugly wound.

306 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

and shields. Then came four standard-bearers, carrying the standards of each seignory, which had their arms depicted upon them. Then came sixty thousand bowmen, passing in files of twenty, the standards emblazoned with the arms of the captain of each company appearing at intervals. As the standard-bearers approached the Spanish General, they lowered their standards; whereupon he rose and took off his fur cap. The whole company, then, in a graceful manner, bowed, and shot their arrows into the air. Then came forty thousand shield bearers (*rondeleros*), but it is not mentioned what arms for offence they carried; and, lastly, ten thousand pikemen.

Cortes addressed the Tlascalan Chiefs very skilfully, telling them that he was going to take his departure the next day, to enter into the territory of their common enemy, the Mexicans; but that city of Mexico could not be taken without the aid of those brigantines which were being built at Tlascala. He, therefore, begged his allies to furnish the Spaniards left to build these vessels with all the means of doing so, and to treat them well, as they always had done, in order that the vessels might be ready, when, if God should give him the victory, he should send from the city of Tezcuco for them. The Tlascalans replied with enthusiasm that they would die where he died, so that they might revenge themselves upon the men of Mexico, their principal enemies; that, with regard to the brigantines, they would not only do what he told them, but when the vessels were finished, they would convey them to Mexico, and that then the whole Tlascalan force would accompany him to the war.

CHAPTER X

THE MARCH TO TEZCUCO—SURPRIZES IZTAPALAPA—EXPEDITION ROUND THE GREAT LAKE—FINAL PREPARATIONS FOR THE SIEGE OF MEXICO

HAVING so far prospered in all that he had planned against the devoted city of Mexico, Cortes started from Tlascala on the 28th of December,¹ the Feast of the Innocents. There were three ways leading to Tezcuco; Cortes chose the most difficult one, thinking wisely that it would be the least protected. Ten thousand Tlascalans accompanied him. He met with very little opposition, and with none that needs recounting, on the way. When he approached the spot from which the whole province of Mexico could be seen, Cortes bade his men give thanks to God for having brought them so far in safety. The army regarded the scene with a mixture of pleasure and sorrow: pleasure, from the hope they had of future conquest; sorrow, from the losses which that view brought back to their minds; and they all promised one another not to quit the country, but to conquer or die. After they had expressed that determination, they went on as gaily as if they were going to a festival.² That night the Spaniards halted at Coatepeque, a city subject to Tezcuco, and three leagues distant from it. The Spaniards found the place deserted; and as Cortes knew that the province belonging to Tezcuco was very populous, so that, as he remarks, it could furnish more than one hundred and fifty thousand warriors, he was

¹ [1520.]

² "But although we took great pleasure in seeing those territories, this feeling was not unmixed with sadness when we recalled the losses we had suffered, and we all resolved never to quit the country defeated, but rather to lay down our lives. With this determination we all proceeded as gladly as if we were going to a festival."—LORENZANA, p. 188.

308 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

very watchful that night. Nothing, however, happened; and, the next day, being the last of December, they resumed their march in considerable perplexity as to what were the intentions of the Tezcucans. They had hardly left their quarters before they met four Indian Chiefs, one of whom Cortes recognised as an acquaintance, bearing a rod with a small flag of gold on it, a signal of peace, "which God knows," he adds, "how much we desired." The Chiefs, who came on the part of the King of Tezcuco, made excuses for the injuries which Cortes had received on a former occasion, and said that their King begged that Cortes would do no damage to their country, assuring him that they wished to be vassals to the King of Spain. After some further conference, they asked him whether he was going to the city that day, or whether he would take up his quarters in one or other of those towns which were suburbs¹ to Tezcuco. These suburbs extended for a league and a half, with houses all the way along.² Cortes replied that he meant to reach Tezcuco that day, whereupon the Chiefs said that they would go forward and prepare the lodgings of the Spaniards. That evening, New Year's Eve, Cortes entered Tezcuco, and took up his quarters in the Palace of the King's late father, giving notice immediately, by a herald, that no Spaniard should quit the building without his leave. This he did to reassure the people, for he had noticed that not a tenth part of the usual population was visible, and that he could see no women or children, which was a bad sign. Some Spaniards having ascended the terraced tops of the building, which commanded the adjacent country, perceived that the inhabitants were flying from it, some betaking themselves with their goods to canoes upon the lake, and others hurrying off to the neighbouring sierras. Cortes immediately gave orders to stop their flight, but, as night now came quickly on, the pursuit was of no use. The King, whom Cortes says that he desired to have in

¹ This shows the prosperity of the district, and is an important indication of the peace which it must have enjoyed.

² "Suburbs of the said city, called Coatinchan and Guaxuta, a league and a half distant from it, with houses all the way along."—LORENZANA, p. 190.

his hands, "as he desired salvation," together with many of the principal men, was amongst the fugitives who had gone to the city of Mexico. It was in the hope of detaining Cortes and preventing his entering the city as an enemy, that the messengers from Tezcucó had gone to meet him and parley with him in the morning. The chiefs of the neighbouring suburbs, or towns as they may more properly be called, did not follow the example of the King of the Tezcucans in his flight to Mexico, but after a few days returned and made peace with Cortes. The Mexicans, hearing this, sent an angry message to them, assuring them at the same time that, if they had made peace with Cortes in order to save their lands, they might enjoy other and better lands if they would come to Mexico. This message had no effect, and the chiefs delivered the messengers into the hands of Cortes, who availed himself of the opportunity to send an offer of peace by them to the authorities at Mexico. He assured them that he did not desire war, although he had much cause for offence; but that he wished to be their friend, as he had been of yore. He added, they well knew that those who had been chiefly concerned in the former war with him were dead (the small-pox had been busy at Mexico, and had carried off the King); "wherefore," he said, "let the past be past, and do not give me occasion to destroy your lands and cities, which I should much regret." This good message led to no result, but the alliance with the neighbouring chiefs was cemented (Cortes seems to have had a genius for making alliances), "and," he adds, as if he were already a viceroy, "in the name of Your Majesty, I pardoned them their past errors, and so they remained content."

The Spanish General stayed for seven or eight days at Tezcucó, doing nothing but fortifying his quarters, and when he had done that, he sallied forth with a portion of his forces to make an attack upon the beautiful town of Iztapalapa. Iztapalapa was, comparatively speaking, a small place, of which about two-thirds were situated absolutely in the water. Cortes had an especial grudge against this town, because it had belonged to the late

310 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

King, that brother of Montezuma who had been a principal agent in the events which led to the Spaniards being driven out of the city. He was the person who was sent out by Cortes to order the market to be resumed, and who had thereupon been adopted as the leader of the insurgents.

Cortes did not enter the town without a vigorous resistance on the part of some troops who were posted at two leagues distance from it, but they were not able to withstand him. About two-thirds of a league before entering the town, he found that a large sluice-gate had been broken up, the position of which was between the Salt Lake and the Fresh-water Lake. The Spaniards thought little of this circumstance, but pushed on with all the "covetousness of victory," routed the inhabitants who made a stand in their town, and killed more than six thousand of them, men, women, and children, in which sad slaughter the Indian allies took a prominent part. When night came on, Cortes recalled his men from their work of plunder and destruction, and then finished by setting fire to some houses. While these were burning, it appears, says Cortes, that "Our Lord inspired me with the thought, and brought to my memory this sluice-gate which I had seen broken in the morning."¹ The great danger he was in struck him in a moment. He instantly gave orders for retreat. It was nine o'clock before he reached the spot of greatest inundation, which I think must have been between that hill which stood over the town and the short causeway connecting Iztapalapa with the main-land. Here Cortes found the water rushing in with great force. The Spaniards bounded across the dangerous pass (*pasamos á volapie*); but some of the Indian allies, not so agile or more encumbered, were drowned; and all the spoil was lost. If they had stopped for three hours more, or if the moon, always a favourer of the romantic Cortes, had not shown forth most opportunely on that night,² none of them would have escaped alive.

¹ This narrative only becomes intelligible on the supposition that Cortes entered Iztapalapa on the south side (as he had done before on his first entry into Mexico), and not on the Tezcucan side.

² See VEYTIA, *Hist. Antigua de Méjico*, tom. 3, Apendice, cap. 16. Méjico, 1836.

When day dawned, the height of one lake was the same as the height of the other ; and the Salt Lake was covered with canoes, containing Mexican soldiers, who had hoped to find the Spaniards cut off in their retreat, and surrounded by water. Cortes withdrew his men in safety to Tezcuco, having escaped one of the many great dangers of his life. Had any other of the Spanish commanders been the leader of that expedition, it would probably have perished. If valour be the sword, a keen appreciation of danger (often possessed in the highest degree by those who bear themselves best when in danger) is the shield of a great general, or, indeed, of any one who has to guide and to command.

After the return of Cortes to Tezcuco, the people of Otumba, who had already felt the weight of the Spanish General's hand, sent to seek his alliance, and were received as faithful vassals of the King of Spain.

The next enterprize which Cortes undertook, was one of great importance, for its drift was to secure a free communication between his present position at Tezcuco and his friendly town of Tlascala, and also his own colony at Vera Cruz. For this purpose he sent the Alguazil Mayor, Gonzalo de Sandoval, to the town and province of Chalco. A battle took place ; Sandoval was victorious ; and two sons of the Lord of Chalco came to Tezcuco to make friends with Cortes. These Princes had always been friendly to him, but had hitherto been under the control of the Mexicans. They required a safe-guard for returning, and were accordingly placed under the escort of Sandoval, who was ordered, after seeing them in safety, to go on to Tlascala, and to bring back with him some Spaniards who had been left there, and a certain younger brother of the King of Tezcuco. This prince had been one of the prisoners of Cortes before the retreat from Mexico, and being young, was easily indoctrinated with the Spanish modes of thought, and had received in baptism the name of Fernando. When this youth was brought to Tezcuco by Sandoval, Cortes gave him the kingdom of his forefathers. This, as we shall hereafter see, was a most politic stroke, and it was of immediate service to the Spanish cause. The Tezcucans, finding a member of their own

royal family placed upon the vacant throne, began to bethink themselves of returning to their homes. Political refugees seldom meet with the good reception they expect, and to which they think their sufferings and their sacrifices entitle them. However that may be, from the time of Don Fernando's accession, the town began to be repopled by its former inhabitants, and to look like itself again.

Since his arrival at Tezcuco, Cortes had been continuously successful in attracting to his banner new allies amongst the Indians. He was now to hear of good news from Spain. A youth of his household made his way across the country, knowing the delight his master would receive from the intelligence (in the words of Cortes, "that nothing in the world would give him greater pleasure"), to inform him that a ship had arrived at Vera Cruz, bringing, besides the mariners, thirty or forty Spaniards, eight horses, with some cross-bows, muskets, and gunpowder. These seem but small reinforcements to make glad the heart of a man about to attempt the conquest of a great and populous country. Cortes, however, had men enough in his Indian allies to form the gross material of an army. But each Spaniard was as good as an officer; and the value of horses, guns, and powder, against an enemy who possessed none of these things, was incalculable.

The demands made upon Cortes in consequence of his Indian alliances were very great, and at times very embarrassing. It was not to be expected that the advantage of such alliances could be all on one side; and on the very day that Cortes received the news of the arrival of reinforcements from Spain, he had an embassy from the Chalcans, beseeching assistance against the Mexicans, who were coming upon them, they said, with great power. The remarks of Cortes upon this occasion are very notable, and furnish an explanation of much of his future conduct. In a letter to the King, he says, "I certify to Your Majesty, as I have done before, that, beyond our own labours and necessities, the greatest distress which I had, was in not being able to aid and succour our Indian allies, who, for being vassals of Your Majesty, were harassed and molested by the Mexicans."¹ The difficulty of difficulties

¹ LORENZANA, p. 204.

in writing history, or reading it, is to appreciate the habitual current of ideas, the basis of thought, often so strangely opposed to our own, which belonged to the generation of which we read or write. It seems a mockery to us in the present age to talk of these Indian provinces as in a state of vassalage to the King of Spain; but evidently Cortes and the Spaniards of his time held very different notions on this subject. Cortes thought that the men who had once become vassals of the King of Spain, had not only duties to perform, which he was very rigorous in exacting, but also that they had distinct claims upon him as the King's Lieutenant in those parts, an office into which he had inducted himself. On the present occasion, therefore, he was greatly perplexed by the demand of the Chalcans, for he could not spare his own men, being about to send a detachment of them under Sandoval to escort the Tlascalans who were to bring him the wrought materials of the brigantines.

He resolved, however, to aid the Chalcans by claiming assistance for them from the neighbouring provinces, which were in his alliance. Accordingly, he was about to furnish them with a letter which, though they could not read nor comprehend it, was always taken as a sort of voucher, when it fortunately happened that before the Chalcan embassy departed, there arrived, from the provinces friendly to Cortes, messengers, who had been sent to see whether he required any aid, for his allies had observed many smokes, and were afraid that Cortes was in need of their assistance. Cortes thanked the messengers warmly, told them that, thanks be to God, the Spaniards had always had the victory, and that glad as he was at the good-will their province had shown, he was still more glad of having an opportunity of making them confederates with the Chalcans, which he succeeded in doing; and afterwards they assisted one another.

In three days after this business was settled, Cortes despatched Sandoval for the materials of the brigantines. When the Alguazil Mayor approached the territory of Tlascala, he found that the expedition had already set out. The men appointed to carry the materials were

314 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

eight thousand. There was another body of two thousand, to furnish a relief for the bearers, and to carry provisions; and the escort consisted of a body of twenty thousand armed men. A noted warrior of Tlascala, called Chichimecatl, led the van with ten thousand, and the other ten thousand brought up the rear under the command of two other Tlascalan Chiefs. On entering an enemy's country different arrangements had to be made. Chichimecatl had had the wood-work (*la tablazon*) of the brigantines under his charge, and the other captains the rigging and cordage (*la ligazon*). It was now thought advisable to throw the heavier part of the burden in the rear; but it was with the greatest difficulty that they could persuade the brave Chieftain to accept that position. At last, however, the march was thus arranged. In front came eight horsemen and a hundred Spanish foot; then ten thousand Tlascalans, forming an advance-guard, and also with wings thrown out to the right and the left; then came the bearers of the rigging and cordage; after them the bearers of the heavier burdens; and the whole line of march was closed by eight more Spanish horsemen, a hundred Spanish foot, and Chichimecatl with his force of ten thousand men. It would have been worth while for the Mexicans to have made almost any efforts and any sacrifice to have cut off or embarrassed this formidable reinforcement; but they did not do so, and in three days' time it approached Tezcuco. Cortes went out to meet it; the Indians put on their plumes of feathers and their handsome dresses, and the procession joyfully entered Tezcuco to the sound of musical instruments. From the van-guard to the rear-guard it occupied two leagues in length, and was six hours in entering the town without the ranks being broken. Cortes thinks that this was a marvellous exploit, and so it was, but not one of such difficulty as that of Vasco Nuñez when he transported his ships from Acla to the seaside. The Tlascalans expressed their longing to be led against the Mexicans, and their readiness to die in company with the Spaniards. Cortes thanked them, and told them that for the present they must rest themselves, but that very soon he would give them their hands full of work to be done.

While his ships were being put together, Cortes went out to reconnoitre, taking with him a considerable force of his own men and thirty thousand of his allies. As he did not yet quite trust the Tezcucans, he did not let them know of his purpose or even of the direction of his march. His object, however, was to have some personal communication with the Mexicans. He, therefore, went round the north part of the Salt Lake, and after the usual encounters, succeeded in occupying Tlacuba, a town which was in close communication with Mexico. Very "pretty" combats took place every day between the Tlascalans and the Mexicans, and much vituperation was interchanged. Frequently the Spaniards and their allies made an entrance along the causeway into the suburbs of Mexico. Then, discourses such as Homer in more dignified language would have commemorated, passed between the combatants. "Come in, come in, and rest yourselves," exclaimed the indignant Mexicans; or they would say, "Perhaps you think there is now another Montezuma, so that you may do just what pleases you?" But one memorable conversation they held with Cortes himself, he being on one side of an aperture in the causeway where the bridge had been taken up, and they being on the other. The Spanish General made a sign to his men that they should be quiet, and the Mexican Chiefs on their side caused silence to be maintained amongst their people. Cortes began by asking whether they were madmen, and if it was their wish to be destroyed. He then demanded to know if any principal Lord was present amongst them, and, if so, requested he would approach, that they might have a conference. The Mexicans replied that all that multitude of warriors whom he saw there were Lords; wherefore that he should say whatever he wanted to say. But Cortes, probably seeing from the temper and bearing of the Mexicans that nothing was to be done in this conference, remained silent, upon which they began to mock him, when some one on the Spanish side shouted out "that the Mexicans were dying of hunger, and that we should not permit them to go out and seek food." They replied that they were in no want

316 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

of it, and that if they should be they would eat the Spaniards and the Tlascalans. Then one of them took some maize cakes, and threw them at the Spaniards, saying, "Take and eat, if you are hungry, for we are not so in the least"; and then they began immediately to shout and to fight. Cortes, seeing that there was no likelihood of obtaining a favourable reply to his overtures, and wishing to hasten the completion of the brigantines, returned to Tezcuco, after remaining six days in Tlacuba.

After his return to Tezcuco, Cortes received another message from the Chalcans, imploring assistance, and he again sent Sandoval to them, who was completely victorious over the Mexicans in the open field.

The heart of Cortes was now gladdened by the news of fresh reinforcements from Spain, which came in three vessels. It was, probably, in one of these vessels that the King's Treasurer, Juan de Alderete, arrived. There came also at this time a certain friar, named Pedro de Aria, who brought indulgences from the Pope, so that if the soldiers were "somewhat indebted" (and the ways of war are not particularly sinless) they might compound for their transgressions; and we shall not be astonished to hear that the friar soon became rich.¹

Sandoval having returned with many slaves, there was again a day of branding; but the same kind of injustice that the common soldiers had complained of was repeated, so that in future they did not bring their Indian female slaves to be branded, but pretended they were *naborias* (that is, domestic servants), and that they had come peaceably from the neighbouring *pueblos*.²

The Chalcans were again harassed by their enemies,

¹ "He brought indulgences, so that if we were somewhat indebted through the wars we might obtain absolution; by this means the friar became rich in a few months and returned to Spain."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 143.

² "We said that they were domestic servants who had come peaceably from the neighbouring villages and from Tlascala . . . our soldiers fared no better in the division of gold, for if any of them went to demand their share, so many items were balanced against them that they really considered themselves fortunate if they had not to pay something into the bargain."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 143.

and again they summoned Cortes to their aid, sending him a large picture, on a white cloth, of the *pueblos* that were coming against them, and of the roads that they were taking. How it is to be wished that the Spaniards had adopted the some mode of description, and that we possessed now any single drawing of a Mexican building that we could thoroughly rely upon!

Cortes, partly with a view to succour these Chalcans, who were a continual care to him, and partly to make a thorough survey of the borders of the Lake, now undertook an expedition southwards. It was full of adventure and of risk for him; but, as it had no bearing on the main events of the war, I shall not give it in detail. It was in the course of this expedition, after he had been in great peril of his life, and had lost two of his grooms, who were carried off to be sacrificed, that he was standing at Tlacuba, looking at the great temple (which was clearly visible from there), and thinking, it is supposed, of all that he had suffered in the *noche triste*, when he was heard to sigh deeply. It was this expression of sorrow which gave rise to a romance, well known at the time, beginning with the following words:—

“ In Tacuba stands Cortes,
With his troopers strong and brave :
Sad he was and deeply grave ;
Sad, and heavily oppressed.
With one hand his cheek he pressed ;
Against his side, the other.”¹

Bernal Diaz, who must have been present, remembered that the Bachiller, Alonso Perez, endeavoured to comfort Cortes. “Señor Captain,” he said, “let not your Honour be so sad, for in war these things are wont to occur, and, at least, it will not be said of you,

“ Mira Nero de Tarpeya
Á Roma como se ardia ” ;²

¹ BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 145 (Bancroft's Translation).

² “ Nero looked from the Tarpeian
On Rome as it burnt ;
Clamoured young and old,
But he nothing repented.
And gladly saw it ! ”

“ It seems that this romance on the burning of Rome enjoyed a

318 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

and Cortes answered that Alonso Perez knew how often he had sent to Mexico, in order to persuade its citizens to make peace; and that the sadness which he felt was not for one thing alone, but in thinking of all that would have to be encountered before the Spaniards should obtain the mastery.¹

Cortes was quite justified in making this statement, for previously to this expedition he had sent three Mexican Chiefs, who had been captured in the war against the Chalcans, with a letter containing proposals for peace, the tenor of which he had carefully explained to them by interpreters. Nor was this the only occasion, for he had lost no opportunity of sending back any Mexican who fell into his hands, instructing him to admonish his fellow-citizens, and urge them to submit themselves to the Spaniards.²

Cortes having concluded this expedition round the Lake, during which he underwent great peril, returned to a

great popularity among the people, since it is contained in the many collections, and with many different readings in the various examples." — *Romances sobre varios asuntos*, No. 46. DEPPING, *Romancero Castellano*.

¹ It will astonish those who have been accustomed to consider Cortes as little else than a compound of craft and cruelty, to see him display such tenderness on this, and on other occasions. They will recall the massacre at Cholula, and the ferocious condemnation of Quaalpopoca and of those other Mexican officers who had merely executed the commands of their sovereign. But it is highly probable that this tenderness of Cortes was an essential part of his character; and, in truth, it does not need much knowledge of mankind to discern how little a man's actions may tell of himself, and how the most striking deeds of his life may be very unlike the deepest parts of his character.

In future years we find the Conqueror of Mexico delighting in the society of polished and learned men, and his house, like the country seat of Leo the Tenth, becoming a resort for persons who loved to discuss philosophy.

"Pedro de Navarra published, in 1567, forty Moral Dialogues, partly the result of conversations held in an *Academia* of distinguished persons, who met, from time to time, at the house of Fernando Cortés." — TICKNOR, *History of Spanish Literature*, i, p. 493.

² "For which reason, whenever I had anyone belonging to the city in my power, I sent him back to advise and warn his countrymen to make peace." — LORENZANA, p. 216.

SPANISH PLOT TO MURDER CORTES 319

still greater peril of a domestic nature. A man of the name of Villafañá, a great friend of the Governor of Cuba, acting in concert with some other soldiers of the party of Narvaez, formed a conspiracy to murder Cortes. The plan was as follows. They had heard that a vessel had just come from Spain, so that letters and despatches might be immediately expected. They intended, therefore, to enter the apartment of Cortes when he was seated at table, eating in company with his captains and soldiers;¹ they would then offer him a letter, saying that it came from his father, Martin Cortes, and while he was reading it they would stab him and the rest of the company. They had arranged who was to succeed him in the command, and many persons were implicated in the conspiracy. But all conspiracies are in this dilemma;—either the secret is intrusted to very few, in which case the conspirators are weak and unprepared for the emergency when it comes—or rather for the transactions after the emergency,—or it is intrusted to many, and unless acted upon instantly, can hardly be kept a secret. In this case too many had been consulted, and a common soldier betrayed the secret.² Cortes summoned his own adherents, with the *alcaldes* and *alguazils*, entered Villafañá's apartments, and made him prisoner. Cortes then took from him a memorial which contained the signatures of the conspirators, but afterwards gave out that Villafañá had eaten this paper, and that he, Cortes, had never seen it. Villafañá was executed, and several other persons were imprisoned, but no one besides Villafañá suffered capitally. This plot gave an opportunity to Cortes to institute without offence a guard for his own person, which was afterwards of signal service to him during the siege of Mexico. Thus this danger turned out, as so many had done before,

¹ BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 146.

² [The reconnoitring expedition round the lake had been a time of hard and continuous fighting; this doubtless disgusted the Narvaez men, tempted by promises of easy victory and lukewarm adherents at the best. Then, on returning to Tezcuco, there was a distribution of plunder and slaves in which, as usual, Cortes took his lion's share of a fifth, and was accused of favouritism in allotting the prettiest slaves to his favourites. Herrera says that some 300 men were implicated, which points to widespread disaffection.]

320 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

a source of safety to Cortes: indeed, a wise man can generally make some considerable profit out of past dangers and sufferings, which, perhaps, is but fulfilling one of the chief intentions of human life.

Everything was now ready for the great enterprise of the siege of Mexico,—the turning point of the fortunes of Cortes. His brigantines had been put together. The canal was finished along which they were to be launched from Tezcuco into the Lake. He had exhausted his efforts to bring the Mexicans to terms. He had made, in person, a thorough survey of the adjacent country; and he was rich in alliances with many of the neighbouring states. He now summoned his Indian allies to his aid. They were desired to come from Cholula, Tlascala, Chalco, Huaxocingo, and other towns, and to join his forces at Tezcuco within ten days. Though Tezcuco was a large town it could not contain the Indian allies. The Tlascalans came in good equipment and with admirable spirit, eager for the fray.¹ Bernal Diaz well compares the clouds of Indians who followed in their march to the birds of rapine which were wont to follow an army in Italy; and the comparison was not merely a poetical or fanciful one, as the food both of the fowl birds and of the Indians was occasionally human flesh.² His Indian allies, however, were not merely useful to Cortes, but absolutely requisite; and it would have been ludicrous to have attempted the siege of Mexico without them.

¹ "They entered Tezcuco two days before the feast of the Holy Ghost, and, according to Alonso de Ojeda, it took three days for all the people to enter; nor could Tezcuco, though so great a city, hold them all. They came gaily, well armed, and desirous of fighting, as they clearly showed."—TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. 4, cap. 89.

² "So great a multitude had been induced to join us in the hope of booty, and certainly in the expectation of a plentiful repast of human flesh, which they well knew would not fail after a battle. I cannot better compare these many thousands of Indians than to the vultures, ravens, and other birds of prey, which, in the Italian wars, follow the armies to support themselves on the dead bodies remaining on the field where some bloody battle has been fought."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 144.

THE FINAL MARCH ON MEXICO 321

Cortes went out to meet his special friends, the Tlascalans, and addressed the Spaniards in their presence somewhat in the following manner:—

Enlarging upon the quality of the enterprize, and the honour which would be gained in subduing the finest and largest city in the world (*la mejor y mayor ciudad del mundo*), he said, that, putting aside the service of God, which was the most important thing, great glory was to be gained; and also vengeance for the affront they had received; moreover such a conquest for their King as mortal men had never before accomplished on behalf of any monarch. He reminded them that they were Castillians, a warlike and most brave nation; that, including their allies, they had an army such as the Romans had never collected together; that they had vessels to destroy their enemies' canoes, and to enter into the streets of the city of Mexico; and also that they were well provided with supplies. He said that with their brigantines they were masters upon the water; with their horses, upon the open plain: while their position upon the Tierra-firme enabled them to retire, if it should be necessary. He concluded by telling them that no great thing was ever done but at great sacrifice (*que nunca mucho costo poco*); and then he spoke to them of all the rewards of victory, not, as he said, to give them courage, for he well knew that they had no need of that, but only to remind them who they were, and what was their enterprize, that they might enter upon it with joy and contentment, since as honourable men, this war had been undertaken by them for the sake of God and of themselves.

The principal captains replied that the whole army understood that it was an agreement amongst them not to quit the siege until they conquered or died, and that they came to this resolve with greater willingness, having him for their General, with whom they were well contented, as they were ready to prove by their deeds.

BOOK XI

THE SIEGE OF MEXICO

CHAPTER I

THE SPANIARDS AND THEIR ALLIES COMMENCE THE SIEGE—
DEFEAT OF THE MEXICANS ON THE LAKE—MEXICO EN-
TIRELY INVESTED—COUNCIL SUMMONED BY THE MEXICAN
KING—RESULT OF THE FIRST GENERAL ATTACK—THE
VARIOUS SUCCESSES OF ALVARADO'S DIVISION—IMPATIENCE
OF THE SOLDIERS—THE SECOND GENERAL ATTACK—THE
SPANIARDS DEFEATED

CORTES formed his troops into three divisions, placing one under the command of Pedro de Alvarado, another under Cristoval de Olid, and the third under Gonzalo de Sandoval, the Alguazil Mayor.

Pedro de Alvarado, had thirty horsemen, eighteen cross-bowmen or musketeers, and a hundred and fifty men with sword and buckler. Twenty thousand Tlascalcan warriors accompanied this division, under the command of Xicotencatl, *el mozo*. Alvarado's division¹ was to take up its quarters at Tlacuba.

The second division, commanded by Cristoval de Olid, the Maestre del Campo, consisted of thirty-three horsemen, eighteen cross-bowmen or musketeers, and a hundred and sixty swordsmen. A body of more than twenty thousand Indian allies accompanied this force, which was to take up its position in Cuyoacan.

Sandoval, the Alguazil Mayor, had under his command twenty-four horsemen, four musketeers, thirteen cross-bowmen, and a hundred and fifty swordsmen, fifty of

¹ Bernal Diaz, the historian, was in this division.

THE ARMY AND THE FLOTILLA 323

them being picked young men; a sort of body-guard, as I conceive, to Cortes.¹ The Indian allies who accompanied this division, amounted to more than thirty thousand, being all those who came from Huaxocingo, Cholula, and Chalco. This division was to march to Iztapalapa, destroy it, pass on by a causeway under cover of the brigantines, and unite with Olid's division at Cuyoacan, in the neighbourhood of which the Alguazil Mayor was to choose a spot for his camp.

There were left, to man the brigantines, more than three hundred men, most of them good seamen—each brigantine having twenty-five men, with six cross-bowmen or musketeers. Contrary to the advice of the principal personages² in his army, but very wisely, Cortes had determined to lead this division himself, for, as he afterwards remarked, the key³ of the whole war was in the ships.

Previously, however, to the first division of the army leaving for Tezcuco, an incident occurred which might have been fraught with the most serious consequences. To regulate the behaviour of his men towards each other is always one of the greatest difficulties for the general of an allied army, and one that requires the nicest management. Cortes did all that he could, by good rules, stringently maintained, to make his Spaniards behave well to his Indians. It happened, however, that a Spaniard inflicted some personal injury upon a cousin of Xicotencatl, the younger, the Tlascalan Prince who had formerly commanded the armies of that republic against Cortes. Whether in consequence of this new disgust, or from his old grudge, or, as some say, from

¹ "Chosen young men that I brought in my Company."—LORENZANA, p. 236.

² "Although I much desired to be ashore to direct the army, yet as the captains were persons who could be very well trusted with their charge, and that of the brigantines was of such great importance, requiring concerted action and great care, I determined to embark in them, because the greatest risk and the greatest advantage were both to be expected by water, although the principal persons with me formally requested me to be with the main body, as, in their opinion, exposed to the most risk."—LORENZANA, p. 240.

³ "They were the key of the whole war."—LORENZANA, p. 242.

324 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

the wish to see a Tlascalan lady,¹ Xicotencatl resolved to throw up his command, and to quit the camp. It is not improbable that his conduct was influenced by motives which might be termed treasonable, or patriotic, according to the point of view from which they are regarded; and he may have thought it a good opportunity for raising the standard of revolt against the Spaniards.

It was arranged that the Tlascalans attached to Alvarado's division should set off a day before the Spaniards, in order not to embarrass them in the march. As the Tlascalans were proceeding carelessly along, Chichimecatl, the brave warrior who had brought the brigantines from Tlascala, and had been so displeased at not being allowed to lead the van-guard, observed that their General, Xicotencatl, was not with them. He returned immediately, and informed Cortes. The Spanish General lost no time in despatching messengers who were to adjure the fugitive Tlascalan Chief to resume his command, begging him to consider that his father, Don Lorenzo (the old Tlascalan Chief had been baptized), if he had not been old and blind, would himself have led his countrymen against Mexico. To this Xicotencatl replied, that, if his father and Magisca had listened to him, they would not have been so much lorded over by the Spaniards, who made them do whatever they wished; and he gave for his final answer, that he would not return. Cortes, being informed of this reply, immediately ordered an alguazil, with four horsemen and five Indian chiefs, to go in pursuit of Xicotencatl, and, wherever they should come up with him, to hang him. This sentence was carried into effect, notwithstanding that Pedro de Alvarado interceded warmly in behalf of the Tlascalan Prince. It will show the reverence which the Indians entertained for their princes, that many of them came to seek a scrap of his clothes;²

¹ See TORQUEMADA, lib. 4. cap. 90.

² "There came many Indians who took the mantle and the breechcloth, which is a broad band serving for breeches, as also the waistcloth, and he who could carry off a fragment believed that he possessed a great relic. This execution struck terror into them all, he being a

COMMENCEMENT OF THE SIEGE 325

and it is another instance of the stern audacity of Cortes, that he should have ventured to put such a potent chief to death at so critical a period. But, as will hereafter be seen, it was very fortunate that he did so. The three things in a man's character which are best rewarded in this world are boldness, hardness, and circumspection. Cortes possessed the first and last qualifications in the highest degree; and, if he were not by nature a hard man, had the power of summoning up hardness whenever it was requisite to do so.

On the 10th of May ¹ 1521, Alvarado and Olid quitted Tezcuco in company, and proceeded to occupy the positions assigned to them. The very first night after their departure these Commanders had a quarrel about the encampment of their men, which Cortes learned directly, and interposing with all speed, sent an officer that night with instructions to reprimand these Generals, and afterwards to make them friends again. On their way to Tlacuba they found the intervening towns deserted, and, when they came to Tlacuba itself, that city also was without inhabitants. The army occupied the palace of the King, and, though it was the hour of Vespers when they entered, the Tlascalans, with the hatred of neighbours, made a reconnaissance along two of the causeways which led to Mexico, and fought for two or three hours with the Mexicans.

The ensuing morning Alvarado and Olid commenced the work of destruction by cutting off, according to the commands of Cortes, the great aqueduct which supplied the city. It is melancholy to observe that such works as these, which are among the greatest triumphs of civilization, should be the first objects of attack in war, but it was good service, and thoroughly executed, although not without considerable opposition from the Mexicans, both by land and water.

On the succeeding day, Olid, with the whole of his division, moved on to Cuyoacan, described as being two

very great and noble person among the Indians."—TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. 4, cap. 90.

¹ BERNAL DIAZ says it was on the 13th of May. [On the 22nd of May according to Mr. H. H. Bancroft.]

326 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

leagues from Tlacuba.¹ They found this city also deserted,² and they occupied the regal palace there.

It was now time for Cortes himself to quit Tezcuco, and commence operations in concert with the Alguazil Mayor. At four in the morning, on the day after the Festival of Corpus Christi, Cortes despatched Sandoval with the whole of his division, to Iztapalapa. That city was about seven short leagues distant. They arrived there a little after mid-day, and began to set fire to the houses, and to attack the inhabitants. These were a maritime race (the town was half built upon the lake), and, not being able to withstand the immense³ force which Sandoval brought against them, took to the water in their canoes, whereupon the Alguazil Mayor occupied the town without further molestation.

Cortes, who was the last of the generals to quit Tezcuco, set sail with the brigantines immediately after he had despatched Sandoval to Iztapalapa, and using both oars and sails, came within sight of the town at the time that Sandoval was entering it. Cortes had intended to have attacked that part of the town which lay in the water, but seeing probably that Sandoval would be able to accomplish the work without him, and observing that a large hill which rose out of the water (now called the *Cerro de Marqués*) was covered with the enemy, he commenced his attack upon their position on that eminence.

¹ I give the distances generally from the words of the first Conquerors. These distances, however, will not always correspond with the actual distances as ascertained by modern investigation, and sometimes, indeed, differ from them widely, as in the above instance. I conjecture that the word league, as used by Cortes or Bernal Diaz, represented a very variable quantity, and depended much upon the nature of the ground traversed, namely, whether it were champaign, hilly, or wooded.

[The ancient Spanish league, abolished, in 1568, was 2.59 English miles.—DOURSTHER, *Dict. des Poids et Mesures*. Bruxelles, 1840.]

² In the estimate which we shall afterwards have to make of the numbers which perished in the siege of Mexico, it must be recollected that immense additions to the population of the place were made by the abandonment of these flourishing towns on the borders of the lake.

³ It appears to have been increased since the original division of the forces, for it is now spoken of as thirty-five thousand or forty thousand men.

FIRST SUCCESS OF THE FLOTILLA 327

It was very lofty and very abrupt, and the heights were fortified by walls of dry stones; but the Spaniards succeeded in forcing the entrenchments, and put all the defenders to the sword, except the women and children. Five and twenty Spaniards were wounded, but, as Cortes says, "it was a very pretty victory."¹

The citizens of Iztapalapa had made smoke-signals (*ahumadas*) from the tops of some temples which were situated upon a very lofty hill, close to the town. From these signals, the Mexicans and the inhabitants of the other towns upon the borders of the lake, learnt the position of the Spanish vessels, and forthwith sent out a great flotilla of five hundred canoes, which bore down straight upon the brigantines. Cortes and his men instantly quitted their position on the hill, and embarked in their vessels. The orders to the captains were, on no account to move until Cortes should give the command. His object was to avoid any partial or disjointed action, and, if he struck at all, to strike a great blow,² such as should at once ensure his naval ascendancy. Silently, therefore, and as if entranced, the brigantines rested upon the water; while the vast multitude of canoes came rushing on, the Mexicans exhausting their strength in their haste to encompass the brigantines. When they had come within two bow-shots of the Spaniards, they rested upon their oars, and gazed upon the new form of their enemy. Still, the Spaniards did not move, and the hostile armaments remained in this position until, as Cortes says, "it pleased Our Lord" that a favourable breeze should arise from the land, upon which, the Spanish Commander immediately gave orders to commence the attack. The weighty brigantines bore down upon the light craft of the enemy with a fatal impetus, crushing them together wherever they came in contact with them. It soon became a total defeat. Numbers of the canoes were sunk, and the Mexican sailors in them destroyed. It must have been a flight almost as soon as it was an encounter; and the brigantines pursued the canoes for

¹ LORENZANA, p. 241.

² "I was anxious that the first encounter we had with them should be a striking success."—LORENZANA, p. 241.

328 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

three long leagues, until they took refuge in the water streets of Mexico. Indeed, that any remained to escape was only owing to the multitude there were to destroy. Thus ended the hopes of the Mexicans of gaining, by their numbers, any advantage on the water; and the maxim of the great modern warrior¹ was again signally exemplified,—namely, that the art of war is the art of being strongest at the immediate point of encounter. If the Mexicans could literally have covered the lake of Tezcuco with canoes, the force and weight of a brigantine, whenever it came in contact with these small vessels, gave it instantly such a decided superiority, as to leave no scope for action on the other side.

Meanwhile, the division under Olid at Cuyoacan could see and rejoice in the victory of their fellow-countrymen. They immediately resolved to enhance it, by making a vigorous charge along the causeway which connected that city with Mexico; and, with the aid of the brigantines, (which, after giving chase to the Mexican boats, approached the causeway), this division of the army succeeded in making a victorious advance of more than a league upon the causeway.

At the point of the causeway where Cortes and his brigantines arrived, after chasing the Mexican boats into the city, there happened to be one or two idol towers, surrounded by a low stone wall. He landed, took the towers after a sharp contest, and then brought up three heavy cannon from the brigantines. The causeway was crowded with the enemy from that spot to the very gates of Mexico; and, moreover, there were numbers of canoes, on that side at least of the causeway where the brigantines were not, or where they could not get at them. Cortes brought one of the guns to bear upon the dense masses of the enemy, and the effect of that fire must have been tremendous. Happily for the Mexicans, there was a deficiency of powder, arising from the carelessness of an artilleryman, by which a quantity had been ignited; and thus Cortes was unable to follow up this advantage.

¹ Napoleon.

ON THE CUYOACAN CAUSEWAY 329

The Spanish Commander had originally intended to proceed to the camp at Cuyoacan ; but, with that power of rapidly changing his plans which is one of the elements in the character of a great general, he determined to take up a position at the spot where he now was, and to summon reinforcements both from Sandoval's and Olid's camp. That first night was a night of much danger for the "Camp of the Causeway" (*Real de la Calzada*), as Cortes calls it, for the Mexicans, notwithstanding the defeat and loss which they had suffered during the day, made a midnight attack upon the Spaniards. Cortes, however, had not failed to send at once to Sandoval at Iztapalapa for all the gunpowder which was in that camp ; and, as each brigantine had a small field-gun (*tiro pequeño de campo*), the Spaniards were enabled to make a vigorous resistance. Thus the enemy were beaten off for that night.

The next morning, at early dawn, reinforcements arrived at the Camp of the Causeway, and they hardly had arrived, before the Mexicans issued from the city and commenced their attack, both by land and by water, and with such shouts and yells, that it seemed as if heaven and earth were coming together. But "loud cries divide no flesh," while the thunder of cannon significantly represents the destruction it accompanies. The Spaniards succeeded in gaining one bridge and one barricade, and drove the Mexicans back to the nearest houses of the city. The brigantines were upon the east side of the causeway, and, consequently, the canoes could approach with less danger on the western side. Cortes, alert to seize every advantage, broke up a small portion of the causeway near his camp, and made four brigantines pass through it. He was thus enabled to drive back the western fleet of canoes into the water-streets of the city. The rest of the brigantines not only put to flight the enemy on their side of the causeway, but, finding ¹ canals into which they could enter

¹ In the course of the siege several circumstances occur which show how immense must have been the size of Mexico. Notwithstanding their former stay in the city, it appears from the expression "finding," that the Spaniards were up to that time ignorant of the existence of those canals.

330 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

securely, they were enabled to capture several of the Mexican canoes, and also to burn many houses in the suburbs. Thus ended the second day of the siege.

On the next morning Sandoval fought his way from Iztapalapa to Cuyoacan, and afterwards arrived at the Camp of the Causeway in time to take part in a little battle, in which he was wounded. For six days the fighting continued much in the same manner as when Cortes first arrived, the brigantines, however, gaining great advantages, especially by means of a large canal which they discovered, that went all round the city, and enabled them to penetrate into some of the densest parts of it, and thus to do considerable damage. They had now so completely quelled the small craft of the Mexicans, that no canoe ventured to approach within a quarter of a league of the Camp of the Causeway.

On the seventh or eight day, Pedro de Alvarado sent from Tlacuba to inform Cortes that there was a causeway¹ at the other end of the town, by which the Mexicans went in and out as they pleased. This was the causeway which led to Tepejacac. Upon receiving this intelligence, Cortes sent the Alguazil Mayor to occupy a position in front of this newly-discovered causeway. He took this step because he felt that it was requisite in order to complete the investment of the place: otherwise, as he remarks, he would have been more glad of the Mexicans going out of the city than they could have been themselves, for he well knew how to deal with them in the open plain. From that day forward, the city of Mexico was entirely invested.

We must now turn for a moment from the besiegers to the besieged. When Quauhtemotzin, the Priest-King of Mexico, perceived that the siege had commenced in earnest,—and with sieges, as appears from their architec-

¹ The error, as it seems to me, in the general descriptions of Mexico, given both by the Conquerors and those who came after them, is in not mentioning causeways enough. There was another little causeway close to this large one, which also was connected with the tierra-firme, and was commanded by Sandoval's camp. There is still a causeway unaccounted for, according to the most ancient map of Mexico.

ture, these warriors were well acquainted,—he summoned a great council of his lords and captains. Then, laying before them the state in which they were,—the revolt of many of their tributary provinces, the want of fresh water, the strength of the brigantines, the destruction which had already taken place of some of the principal posts of defence, the dangers and miseries to which they must look forward,—he asked what was their opinion about coming to terms with the Spaniards? In reply to the Monarch's question the young men and the warriors expressed their desire for war.¹ There were others, however, who said, that as they had four Spaniards and several Indians whom they had taken, and were about to sacrifice, but that they should be in no haste to do so, in order that, if things went worse with them, they might in a few days' time, through the medium of these prisoners, commence negotiations. Others, again, more religiously inclined, maintained that their only course was, with many sacrifices and prayers, to commend themselves to the gods, whose cause was at stake;² and that the Mexican people should trust in the goodness of these superior beings not to forsake them.

The fanatical counsel prevailed. Not, I think, that even in Mexico there were not wise men enough to have contended against such fanaticism; but, from the former conduct of the Spaniards, there was so little to be said on the other side. In truth,—as the son-in-law of Montezuma afterwards informed the historian Oviedo,³—after the attack of Alvarado upon the unarmed chiefs in the temple, the Mexicans put no more trust in the Spaniards. This man, Pedro de Alvarado, was one of

¹ TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. 4, cap. 90.

² "Others desired nothing but that, with many sacrifices and prayers, they should commend themselves to the gods, whose cause was at stake, confiding in their goodness not to fail them."—TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. 4, cap. 90.

³ "Señor Alcalde, that which you ask is an instance, in that few of the people know how to give an account of anything, although the injustice done to the Indians was very notorious and very clear; and from that time they felt such a hatred of the Christians that they put no more trust in them, and so followed the many evils that ensued afterwards."—OVIEDO, *Hist. Gen. y Nat.*, lib. 33, cap. 54.

the most pernicious adventurers of those times. It seldom happens to any one person to be a mighty cause of mischief, almost the cause of downfall, to two great empires; but such were Alvarado's fortunes, as may be seen in the histories of Peru and Mexico, the latter of which he ruined directly, and the former indirectly, and in both cases by acts of wonderful audacity and folly. It has often surprised me that Cortes should have placed so much confidence in such a man; but distinguished personal bravery is such an advantage,—and it was much more so in those times than in the present,—that Cortes may well be excused for putting his trust in a man who, at least, was never known to falter in action.

The prudent councillors in the Mexican assembly had, therefore, little or nothing to urge for their view of the question but the probability of more and more disasters. They were overruled; the prisoners were sacrificed; the gods appeased: their responses became gracious, and the King braced up all his energies for war. "Some have been of opinion," says the Spanish historian of the Indies, "that the Devil was not in the habit of appearing to the Indians, and that if he did appear to them at all, it was very seldom: and that the responses of the gods were the invention of the priests to preserve the authority which these men had over that people."¹ The Priest-King must have known well the nature of the visions and revelations which were reported to the common people; but the fate of Montezuma was before his eyes. The people were for war; the Spaniards were few; and there would not be wanting those who could calculate, as on a former occasion, how many Mexicans might be advantageously sacrificed for one Spaniard. The Tlascalans and all the Indian allies of the Spaniards were as nothing in the eyes of the Mexicans; and so the war was again resumed with fury.²

Cortes now determined to make a combined attack

¹ HERRERA, *Hist. de las Indias*, dec. 3, lib. 1, cap. 17.

² It is impossible to say at what precise time this council took place, for, as may be conceived, we know so much less of what took place amongst the besieged than amongst the besiegers.

upon the city. For this purpose, on the eighth or ninth day after the beginning of the siege, he sent for additional forces from the Camp of Cuyoacan, where he was still obliged to leave a detachment, in order to protect the rear from any attack that might be made by the inhabitants of Xochimilco, Culucan, Iztapalapa, Mexicaltzinco, and other places neighbouring to the lake, which had "rebelled," according to Spanish phraseology, that is, which had renewed their allegiance to their old friends and masters, the Mexicans. The combined attack was arranged by Cortes in the following manner. The swordsmen, cross-bowmen, and musketeers were to form the advance-guard; they were to be supported by brigantines on both sides of the causeway; and a small body of horse was to keep guard on the causeway in the rear of the foot-soldiers. Some cavalry also were to accompany the attacking force. The number of the allies who, according to his own account, were to march with Cortes on this occasion, amounted to no less than eighty thousand; and the siege was to be pressed at two other points, by the Alguazil Mayor and Pedro de Alvarado. It is manifest, therefore, that the Mexicans would have enough to do on this day.

Cortes moved from the Camp of the Causeway early in the morning. The first obstacle his troops met with was a breach in the causeway, which the Mexicans must have made in the night. The aperture was as broad as a lance is long, and its depth was equal to its breadth. The Mexicans had also made a barricade on the other side, and were posted behind it. There the battle commenced, and was very stoutly maintained on both sides. At last the Spaniards succeeded in forcing this position, and marched along the causeway, until they came to the entrance of the city, where there was an idol tower, at the foot of which had been a very large bridge—probably, in part, a drawbridge. This had been lifted up, or destroyed, and on the other side a strong barricade had been formed. This point of defence was much stronger than the last, for the breadth of the opening was much greater, and, in fact, it was a very broad water-street (*una calle de agua muy ancha*). Here, there-

fore, the Mexicans were strongly posted; but again they were beaten back by the aid of the brigantines, which, it is easy to see, had the great advantage of being able to deploy to the right and the left in the water-street, and so, with their small cannon, cross-bowmen, and musketeers, to take the Mexicans in the flank. By these means they were enabled to dislodge the enemy, which feat, as Cortes himself observes, it would have been impossible to effect without their assistance.

The defenders of the barricade being put to flight, the Spaniards from the brigantines leapt on shore, and, with their assistance, the whole army contrived to pass the water. Here it was that the Indian allies were eminently useful. They were immediately employed in filling up with stones and sun-burnt bricks that part of the water-street which formerly the bridge had spanned; and it is evident that Cortes himself, who always understood where the real difficulty lay in any action, superintended this filling up. His words are, "while *we* filled up this bridge (meaning bridge-way), the Spaniards took another barricade in the great street of the town." For the sake of clearness, I will give a name to this street, and call it the "High Street." It may be noticed, in the most ancient map of Mexico, that there is no difference in the breadth of this street from that of the main causeway. There was no water in it, and, therefore, the Spanish troops were in their element upon it, and could act with force and rapidity. The Mexicans fled until they came to another drawbridge, which had been taken away, all but one broad beam, over which they passed, and then removed it. On the other side, these resolute and untiring men had thrown up another barricade constructed of clay and sun-burnt bricks. This was a very formidable defence. The Spaniards had now advanced beyond the support of their brigantines; and there was no passing, except by throwing themselves into the water. The houses which commanded the street were crowded with the Mexicans, who showered down missiles from the terraced house-tops; and those who were in charge of the barricade fought like lions. The potent

THE SPANIARDS ENTER THE CITY 335

voice, however, of cannon made itself heard above all the noise of the engagement. It was the exact situation in which cannon would come in with the greatest effect, and Cortes had brought two field-pieces with him. The Spaniards seized an opportunity, when the Mexicans gave way before these cannon (which must have swept them down like corn before a tempest), dashed into the water, and passed to the other side. It shows the vigorous resistance which these brave Mexicans made, that it took no less than two hours to wrest this position from them. The barricade, however, being at last deserted, together with the terraces and house-tops, the whole of the assaulting party passed over the bridge-way. Cortes, again, instantly made good the road by filling up the place where the bridge had been, for which materials were ready to his hand in those of the barricade.

The Spanish troops, and all the Indian allies that were not wanted for filling up the bridge-way, pushed on, without encountering any obstacle, for a distance of "two cross-bow shots" in length, until they came to a spot where there was a bridge that adjoined the principal Plaza¹ in the town—where the best houses were situated. The Mexicans had not imagined that the Spaniards could in one day gain so advanced a position. They had accordingly made no preparations at this bridge. They had neither removed it, nor thrown up a barricade on the other side. The Plaza was so full of Mexicans that it could scarcely hold them. To command its entrance, the Spaniards brought up a cannon, the discharges from which must have made fearful havoc in this crowd; finally the Spaniards charged into the Plaza, driving the Mexicans before them into the great square of the Temple, which adjoined and communicated with the Plaza. The Spaniards and their allies continued the charge, forced the Mexicans out of the square, occupied it themselves, and took possession of the towers on the Temple.

The Mexicans, however, perceiving that the Spaniards had no horsemen with them, turned upon their enemies with immense vigour, dislodged them from the towers,

¹ This spot is marked "Platça" in the ancient map.

336 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

drove them from the great court of the Temple, swept on with irresistible fury, cleared the Spaniards out of the Plaza, and into the High Street again, at the same time capturing the single field-piece which had done so much mischief. The Spaniards were retreating in much confusion, when "it pleased God," as Cortes says, "that three horsemen should enter the Plaza." The Mexicans seem to have had a most unreasonable dread of horses. If Montezuma, in his immense collection of animals, had possessed but one horse, and the people had learnt what a docile, timid slave a horse is, the Conquest of Mexico would have been postponed for some time—perhaps to another generation. At this juncture, however, the Mexicans were not afraid of these three horsemen alone, but, seeing them enter the narrow pathway, supposed them to be the front rank of a body of horse. They, accordingly, retreated in their turn. The Spaniards, from being the pursued, became the pursuers; some of them re-entered the great square; and a fight took place on the summit of the Temple between four or five Spaniards and ten or twelve of the chief men among the Mexicans, which ended in the defeat and slaughter of all these chiefs. A few more horsemen now entered the square, which by this time was probably clear of the Mexicans; and these Spaniards contrived an ambuscade, which was successful, and by which thirty Mexicans were killed.

It was now evening, and Cortes gave orders for the recall of the troops; but this backward movement was not executed without considerable danger, for, though the Mexicans must have suffered terribly that day, "the dogs came on so rabidly" (*venian los perros tan rabiosos*), that even the dreaded horsemen could not drive them back, or prevent them from molesting the rear-guard of the Spaniards. They, however, reached the Camp of the Causeway in safety, their chief triumph in the day's work being, that they had burnt the principal houses in the High Street. The Spaniards, therefore, would have nothing to dread next time from the terraces of these houses.

I have been thus minute in describing this day's pro-

ceedings, in order that the narrative may serve to explain future encounters, and give the reader some idea of the defences of Mexico, and of the means of attack which the Spaniards had in their power.

There was rest in the Camp of the Causeway for a day or two; but these were very gainful days for Cortes, as not only did his new friend and ally, the King of Tezcucó, send him thirty thousand warriors under the command of his brother Ixtlilxochitl, called by Cortes "Istrisuchil," but (such are the charms of success!) the inhabitants of Xochimilco and of certain *pueblos* of the Otomies, who were the slaves¹ of the King of Mexico, joined the ranks of the besiegers.

Cortes, finding that he had more brigantines than he needed, assigned three to Sandoval and three to Alvarado. He then prepared for another great attack upon the city, telling his new Indian allies that they must now show whether they really were friends.

Early in the morning, on the fourth day after the entrance into the city above recorded, Cortes commenced his second attack, accompanied by a very large body of his Indian allies (*que era infinita gente*). The short respite, however, which the Mexicans had enjoyed in these three days, had enabled them to undo all that the Spaniards had done, and to make all the defences much stronger. The result was, that the Spaniards did not advance further than the Plaza,—though there, and in its neighbourhood, they perpetrated an act of destruction which went to the hearts of the Mexicans. Cortes says that the determination manifested by the Mexicans on this day convinced him of two things:—that there would be very little spoil, and that the Mexicans would have to be totally destroyed.² His efforts, therefore, were now directed

¹ "The inhabitants of the city of Suchimilco, situated on the lake, and certain villages of the Utumies, a mountain race more numerous than those of Suchimilco, and slaves of the lord of Temixtitlan, came to offer themselves as vassals of Your Majesty."—LORENZANA, p. 252.

² "Considering that the people of the city were rebels, and showed such determination to conquer or die, I came to two conclusions—the one that we should recover little or nothing of the wealth of which they

338 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

to see how he could mortify and depress them most, and so bring them, as he says, to a perception of their error. With this view, he on this day caused the palace of Montezuma's father to be destroyed, that palace where the Spaniards had been so hospitably received on their first coming to Mexico. The Spaniards also destroyed some adjacent buildings, which, though they were somewhat smaller than the palace, were even more delightful and beautiful (*mas frescas y gentiles*), and in which Montezuma had placed his aviary. This destruction must have been a pitiable sight, and Cortes was doubtless sincere in expressing great regret at being obliged to have recourse to such a proceeding. He had, however, the conqueror's ready excuse, that, though it distressed him, it distressed the enemy much more.¹ Having set fire to these buildings, the Spaniards retired, the Mexicans attacking them in the rear with great fury. But the culminating point of vexation for the Mexicans, on that day, must have been to see their former slaves, the Otomies, ranged against them. Bitter were the cannibal threats which passed between the Mexicans and the Indian allies of the Spaniards.

The next day, very early, after having heard mass, which was never omitted, the Spaniards returned to the attack, and, early though it was, the indefatigable Mexicans had repaired two-thirds of all that the Spaniards had destroyed on the preceding day. The Spaniards obtained no signal success this day, nor indeed for many days together, though each day they destroyed much and made some further advance into the town. This comparative slowness of movement is partly to be accounted for by their ammunition falling short. Notwithstanding this, the Spanish division under Cortes succeeded in taking several bridges which were in one of the principal streets,—namely, that which led to Tlacuba. It was a

had deprived us, the second that they had given justification for, and forced us to inflict, their utter destruction."—LORENZANA, p. 254.

¹ "Although it grieved me much, yet as it grieved them much more I determined to burn them, at which the enemy showed much sorrow as did also their allies from the cities on the lake."—LORENZANA, p. 255.

great object to gain this street, in order to effect a communication between the two camps of Cortes and Alvarado. Each day, the proceedings were very much like those on the first day, which I have described in detail. In the evening the Spaniards retreated, and then the Mexican pursued them fiercely; "gluttonously" is the apt word which Cortes employs in speaking of this cannibal people.¹

Meanwhile, the inhabitants of the cities bordering on the lake, appreciating the success of the Spanish General, came and demanded pardon for their past offences, and offered alliance for the future. Cortes employed them most usefully in providing some shelter for his troops encamped on the causeway. He takes this opportunity of illustrating, in his letter to Charles the Fifth, the magnitude of the causeway, stating that the little town which was built to shelter the Spaniards and their allies, in all two thousand men,² was placed entirely on the causeway, there being room for a house on each side, and for a road between, which was sufficiently wide for men and horses to move along it "much at their ease."³

It remains now to be seen what the other divisions of the besiegers had been able to effect; and as, fortunately, Bernal Diaz was in Alvarado's division, we have a good account of what took place in that quarter. Their hardships and difficulties seem to have exceeded those of the division which Cortes commanded. They were not so much molested from the flat roofs of houses; but the breaches in the causeway on their side were more formidable, and their first attacks were made without the support of any brigantines. Bernal Diaz gives a vivid

¹ LORENZANA, p. 258.

² The main body was always stationed at Cuyoacan.

³ "Your Majesty will understand that the causeway going over the deepest part of the lake was so wide that there were huts on both sides of it, leaving in the middle a street along which we could come and go, on foot and horseback, at pleasure. There were constantly in the camp, including Spaniards and the Indians who waited on them, more than two thousand persons. All the other fighters, our allies, were quartered in Cuyoacan."—LORENZANA, p. 260.

picture of the severe toils and hardships they had to endure. He speaks of their many wounds,¹ of the hail of darts, arrows, and stones, which they had to encounter, of the mortification of finding, after they had gained some bridge-way or barricade with great labour in the course of any day, that the same work had to be done again the next morning. He also mentions the poorness of their food, which consisted of maize cakes, some herbs called *quillites*, and cherries. He describes the unwearied resolution and the craft of the Mexicans: how they dug deep pits underneath the water, so that the Spaniards, in their daily retreats, might unadvisedly fall into them; and how they drove stakes into the bed of the lake, which prevented the brigantines from approaching.

At last, Alvarado took a step somewhat similar to that which Cortes had adopted from the first, namely, making a small camp on the causeway, in a spot very similar to that which Cortes had chosen, where there were some idol-towers, and an open place in which the Spaniards could build their huts.² These huts, however, having been hastily thrown up, were no defence against the wet; and, after a hard day's fighting the soldiers had to tend their wounds³ amidst rain, wind, and cold, which they did in the roughest manner, burning them with hot oil, and then compressing them with "blankets of earth,"⁴ after which they ate, amid great

¹ Each day a new standard-bearer was required:—"We came away full of wounds and our soldiers disabled, and I say that every day a fresh standard-bearer was necessary."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 151.

² "We agreed that we should put ourselves on the causeway in a small square where there were some idol-towers we had already taken from them, and where there was room to set up our camp."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 151.

³ The division of Pedro de Alvarado had, however, one great advantage in a soldier called Juan Catalan, who cured wounds by making the sign of the cross over them, and by incantation:—"A soldier named Juan Catalan made the sign of the cross and used charms, and I say truly that we found that our Lord Jesus Christ was pleased to give us strength beyond the many mercies done to us each day and quickly heal us."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 151. In those days any escape from a regular practitioner was a great blessing.

⁴ An expression I do not understand: it may perhaps mean that clay was used to keep the air out of the wound; but it seems more probable that it means to lie down on the bare ground. The following

heaps of mud, what Bernal Diaz calls, "that misery of maize cake" (*essa miseria de tortillas*).

Of these things, however, they would probably have thought but little, but for the extreme severity of the outpost duty, which was managed in the following manner:—When they had taken any barricade, bridge, or bad pass, forty soldiers kept guard there from evening until midnight; these were then relieved by forty other soldiers, who watched from midnight until two o'clock. This second watch was called, in the Spanish armies, "the watch of lethargy," or more generally, as soldiers are given to be brief, "the lethargy" (*la modorra*). The first forty soldiers, when relieved, were not allowed to return to the camp, but lay down where they were, and went to sleep. At two o'clock another company of forty soldiers relieved guard in the same fashion, so that at break of day there were a hundred and twenty soldiers at the pass. On those nights when an attack was apprehended, which was often the case, the whole company watched throughout the night.

are the exact words:—"Luego nos quemavamos con azelte nuestras heridas, y apretallas con mantas de la tierra."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 151.

[The expression is probably a surgical one. In ancient and medieval times it was usual to dress wounds with certain earths (*e.g.* Bole Armeniac, a red Armenian clay) supposed to possess styptic properties. A fifteenth-century dressing for sword wounds (*Sloane MSS.*, 240) is composed of powdered daisies, one ounce; Bole Armeniac, one ounce; Greek pitch, three ounces; Frankincense, half an ounce; and resin of Dragon's blood, two ounces, all to be "stamped" together. Paracelsus (1493-1541) was the first writer of eminence to protest against the received treatment:—"I hope that henceforward surgeons will refrain from their way of covering them (wounds) with white of egg, bole armeniac, or flour, because such ways are entirely contrary to natural processes. . . . The second fault of these surgeons is that after the lapse of three days . . . they fill the wound with an unguent composed of pitch, wax, fat, and oil, mixed; sometimes adding incense, gum mastic, verdigris, and other similar things which are noways fit to be put into wounds." Only the modern surgeon, taught that safety is only to be found in cleanliness and antiseptics, will fully appreciate the unconscious humour of the concluding words.

A sixteenth-century historian (Mendieta, *Hist. Eccles. Ind.*, lib. 2, cap. 26), says that the Aztec armies were accompanied by surgeons and bearers for the wounded. Doubtless the Spanish soldiers used some native preparation for their wounds, perhaps some sort of earth.]

342 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

It may easily be imagined that soldiers enduring daily such hardships would make tremendous efforts to bring the siege to a conclusion, which would sometimes be very imprudent and lead to signal reverses. So it fared with Alvarado's troops, for whom the Mexicans laid a very crafty ambuscade. In a deep and broad aperture of the causeway, where there had been a bridge, they made holes, and, at the same time, placed stakes to prevent the brigantines from acting, also fortifying the side of the aperture which they occupied. They then disposed their force in the following manner:—They posted one division at the aperture; another at a spot within the town; and a third was appointed to take the Spaniards in the rear from Tlacuba.¹ The attack then commenced. The Spaniards repelled the first division of the Mexicans, and passed over this aperture at a spot where it was tolerably easy to ford, and where the holes had not been dug. Meanwhile, the third division of the Mexicans, acting in the rear, occupied all the attention of the Spanish cavalry. Alvarado, unlike the prudent Cortes, had not taken any step to see that a road lay open for retreat, and nothing was done to the aperture after it had been passed by the infantry. The victorious Spaniards pressed forwards into the town, gained two barricades, and found themselves in the midst of some large houses² and oratory towers. At this spot, numerous

¹ It would seem, therefore, that the investment of Mexico was yet incomplete, unless, indeed, there was some side street unobserved by the Spaniards, by which the Mexicans could approach that part of the causeway which was near Alvarado's camp.

² It is very desirable, both for the purposes of this siege, and also in order to understand the degree of civilization to which the Mexicans had attained in some things, to try and form some idea of their houses. It is curious enough, except that all persons so soon become used to a new country, and cease to describe its peculiarities, that the best account of a Mexican house which I have met with, is to be found in the letter sent by the town-council of Vera Cruz to Charles the Fifth immediately after the founding of that town. This account had reference only to the houses in the country towns, or in the country, which the expedition had seen on its way from Cozumel to Vera Cruz. It begins thus:—"There are certain large and well-arranged *pueblos*: the houses, in those parts where they have stone, are built of lime and squared stone; and the rooms are small and low, very much after the Moorish fashion (*muy amoriscados*); and in those parts where they have no stone, they build their houses of sun-burnt bricks, and plaster

bands of warriors poured out from their hiding-place ; those Mexicans who had fled before the Spaniards, having drawn them on sufficiently, now turned upon them ; and the Spaniards, unable to resist the combined attack, were soon put to flight. On fighting their way back to the great aperture, they found that the fordable part of it was occupied by a fleet of canoes, and that it was necessary to pass where the Mexicans had made the passage most dangerous. Here the enemy succeeded in laying hold of five Spaniards (it was always their object to take them alive for sacrifice), and the historian himself with much difficulty escaped from their grasp. He tells us, that when he reached dry land he fell senseless, overcome by the loss of blood, and by the exertions he had made ; " And I say," he adds, " that when they clawed hold of me, in thought I commended myself to Our Lord God and to Our Lady his Blessed Mother, and I put forth my strength, whereby I saved myself, thanks be to God for the mercies which he shows unto me." ¹

The Mexicans, emboldened by their success, made a vigorous attack upon Alvarado's camp that day, but were repelled by cannon.

Cortes was very angry when he heard of this disaster, and gave orders that, henceforward, on no occasion should

them over, and the roofs are of straw. There are houses belonging to the chiefs, which are very airy, and with many rooms, for we have seen more than six courtyards (*patios*) in some houses, and the apartments very well arranged—each principal service by itself ("*cada principal servicio que ha de ser por sí.*"—*Doc. Inéd.*, tom. 1, p. 454); and within the houses are wells and tanks (*albergas*), also rooms for the slaves and people of service, of whom they have many. Outside these houses, at the entrance, there is a large raised court, or even more than one, ascended by steps, and very well built, where they have their mosques, and their terraced walks, which go all round, and are very broad, and there they keep their idols, made of stone, or wood or clay."—*Col. de Doc. Inéd.*, p. 454. It may be conjectured that many of the private houses in the capital were still better built ; and it will be easily seen that such houses were soon convertible into fortresses. PETER MARTYR, obtaining his intelligence from one of the messengers sent to Charles the Fifth by Cortes, says that the roofs of the Mexican houses were made of a bituminous substance :—" They cover the roof not with tiles but with a certain kind of earth or bitumen, that method being more suitable to receive the Sun but believed to be consumed in a shorter time."—Dec. 5, cap. 10.

¹ BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 151.

the Spaniards advance without securing a pathway for their retreat. He went over himself to see Alvarado's camp. But when he found how much they had done, and how far they had advanced, he could not blame them, he said, as much as he had done. In truth, by this time, three-fourths of the city had been taken, that is, three-fourths in magnitude, but not in density, for the densest part of the population lay in the district of the city, called Tlatelulco, round about the market-place, which was, I have no doubt, the oldest part of the town.

The camp of Gonzalvo de Sandoval was not blessed with a chronicler, and so we do not know anything of what passed in it; but we may conclude, from the well-approved valour of its commander, that it was a worthy rival to the others in heroic deeds.

The great aperture, which had already cost several lives to Alvarado's division, was not filled up without the loss of six more Spanish soldiers and four days of time. No mention is made of the loss of the Tlascalans, which, no doubt, was very severe, for they fought with exceeding bravery¹ throughout the war; but in any retreat—and the close of each day was generally a retreat with the Spaniards—these allies were a terrible embarrassment, and the first object was to clear the causeway of them before the Mexicans came down with the final tiger-like² spring with which they were wont to wind up the day's fighting.

It must not be supposed that the check which Alvarado's division had received, was altogether owing to his thoughtlessness. There was a keen rivalry amongst the several divisions; and it was a point of honour with them, which should gain the market-place first. Now, to enter the market-place, it was necessary to penetrate amongst an "infinite" number of *azoteas*, bridges, and broken causeways: indeed, each house was a sort of island fortress.³

¹ "Our friends the Tlascalans aided us throughout the war like very brave men."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 151.

² "They came down as fiercely as tigers, and fought with us step by step."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 151.

³ "To enter the market-place there would be in our way innumer-

CORTES DEFENDS HIS TACTICS 345

The commanders had to endure much importunity from their men: "Why not," they doubtless exclaimed, "make a continuous attack, instead of withdrawing in this way each day, and having so much of our work to do over and over again?" Cortes himself felt that remarks of this kind would occur to any reader of his despatches; and, accordingly, he informs the Emperor, that what looked so feasible could not be done on two accounts. If they did not retreat at night-fall, as had been their practice, they must either move their camp into the Plaza, or into the square of the great Temple, and thus they would be in the midst of the enemy, and liable to attack from morn till night. Or, on the other hand, they must keep their camp where it was, and establish outpost at the passes which they gained,—and if this latter alternative were adopted, he thought there would be too much work for the men, and such as they could not endure.¹ It may be inferred from this explanation, that Cortes was more careful of his troops than Alvarado of his: we have already seen what severe watches were requisite in that division, and how ill the men fared.

The impatience of the soldiers grew to a great height, and was supported in an official quarter,—by no less a person than Alderete, the King's Treasurer. Cortes gave way, against his own judgment, to their importunities. There had all along been a reason for his reluctance, which, probably, he did not communicate to his men: namely, that he had not abandoned the hope that the enemy would still come to terms. "Finally," he says, "they pressed me so much that I gave way."

The attack was to be a general one, in which the divisions of Sandoval and Alvarado were to co-operate; but Cortes, with that knowledge of character which

able terraces, bridges, and breaches in the causeway, so that every house that we should have to pass would be like an island in the midst of the water."—LORENZANA, p. 263.

¹ "Having the camp in the city, the enemy would give us a thousand alarms and attacks every night and every hour, they being many and we being few, so that they could attack us on all sides, and the task of resistance would be insupportable. Then as to guarding the bridges by night, the Spaniards are so wearied by fighting through the day that none of them is fit for guard duty at night."—LORENZANA, p. 257.

belonged to him, particularly explained, that though his general orders were for them to press into the market-place, they were not obliged to gain a single difficult pass which laid them open to defeat; "For," he says, "I knew, from the men they were, that they would advance to whatever spot I told them to gain, even if they knew that it would cost them their lives."¹ This wide discretion allowed to agents is the sign of a wise man.

On the appointed day, Cortes moved from his camp, supported by seven brigantines, and by more than three thousand canoes filled with his Indian allies. When his soldiers reached the entrance of the city, he divided them in the following manner. There were three streets which led to the market-place from the position which the Spaniards had already gained. Along the principal street, the King's Treasurer, with seventy Spaniards, and fifteen or twenty thousand allies, was to make his way. His rear was to be protected by a small guard of horsemen.

The other two streets were smaller, and led from the street of Tlacuba to the market-place. Along the broader of these two streets, Cortes sent two of his principal captains, with eighty Spaniards and ten thousand Indians; he himself, with eight horsemen, seventy-five foot-soldiers, twenty-five musketeers, and an "infinite number" of allies, was to enter the narrower street. At the entrance to the street of Tlacuba, he left two large cannon with eight horsemen to guard them, and at the entrance of his own street, he also left eight horsemen to protect the rear.

Cortes having now buckled on his armour, and being about to undertake, contrary to his own judgment, one of the most remarkable and hazardous actions of his life, let us pause for a moment, amidst the clang of warlike preparation, to recollect that it was just at this time, perhaps on this very day, that another great hero in American history was, in the midst of dire discouragement, about to commence his long projected enterprize. It was in July 1521, that Las Casas set sail from Hispaniola to form his colony on the Pearl Coast—with

¹ LORENZANA, p. 265.

what event awaiting him the reader well knows. It is desirable, however, to mention the fact, as such recollections connect the various portions of this history together, and remind the reader that there were men, even in that day, who looked upon the ordinary course of conquest as a melancholy thing, and strove to make it otherwise. Thinking of such a man as Las Casas, amidst all the bloodshed and brutality of this siege of Mexico, is like the contemplation of a swift, clear stream that brightly moves along, aiding human power, increasing human happiness, and reflecting the utmost light it can, in the midst of an embrowned, desolate, and rugged landscape, beset with all the horrors of a northern winter. But now having for a moment gladdened ourselves by the thought of Las Casas, and of his noble aspirations, we must go back to Cortes and his small band of hardened warriors, each one of them familiar with the slaughter of his fellows, as if it were his daily bread.

The Spaniards and their allies made their entrance into the city with even more success and less embarrassment than on previous occasions. Bridges and barricades were gained, and the three main bodies of the army moved forwards into the heart of the city. The ever-prudent Cortes did not follow his division, but remained with a small body-guard of twenty Spaniards in a little island formed I imagine, by the intersection of certain water streets, whence he encouraged the allies, who were occasionally beaten back by the Mexicans, and where he could protect his own troops against any sudden descent of the enemy from certain side streets.

He now received a message from those Spanish troops who had made a rapid and successful advance into the heart of the town, informing him that they were not far from the market-place, and that they wished to have his permission to push onwards, as they already heard the noise of the combats which the Alguazil Mayor and Pedro de Alvarado were waging from their respective stations. To this message Cortes returned for answer that on no account should they move forwards without first filling up the apertures thoroughly. They sent an answer back, stating that they had made completely

passable all the ground that they had gained; that he might come and see whether it were not so.

Cortes, like a wise commander, not inclined to admit anything as a fact upon the statement of others which could be verified by personal inspection, took them at their word, and did move on to see what sort of pathway they had made; when to his dismay, he came in sight of a breach in the causeway, of considerable magnitude, being ten or twelve paces in width, and about twelve feet in depth, and which, far from being filled up, had been passed upon wood and reeds, and was entirely insecure in case of retreat. The Spaniards, "intoxicated with victory," as their Commander describes them, had rushed on, imagining that they left behind them a sufficient pathway.

There was now no time to remedy this lamentable error, for when Cortes arrived near this "bridge of affliction," as he calls it, he saw many of the Spaniards and the allies retreating towards it, and when he came up close to it, he found the bridge-way broken down, and the whole aperture so full of Spaniards and Indians, that, as he says, there was not room for a straw to float upon the surface of the water. The peril was so imminent, that Cortes not only thought that the Conquest of Mexico was gone, but that the term of his life as well as of his victories had come; and he resolved to die there fighting. All that he could do at first was to help his men out of the water; and, meanwhile, the Mexicans charged upon them in such numbers, that he and his little party were entirely surrounded. The enemy seized upon his person, and would have carried him off, but for the resolute bravery of some of his guard, one of whom lost his life there in succouring his master. The greatest aid, however, that Cortes had at this moment of urgent peril, was the cruel superstition of the Mexicans, which made them wish to take Malinché alive, and grudge the death of an enemy in any other way than that of sacrifice to their detestable gods. The captain of the body-guard seized hold of Cortes, and insisted upon his retreating, declaring that upon his life depended the lives of all of them. Cortes, though at the moment he felt that he

should have delighted more in death than life, gave way to the importunity of this captain, and of other Spaniards who were near, and commenced a retreat for his life. His flight was along a narrow causeway at the same level as the water, an additional circumstance of danger, which, to use his epithet for them, those "dogs" had contrived against the Spaniards. The Mexican canoes approached this causeway on both sides, and the slaughter they were thus enabled to commit, both among the allies and the Spaniards, was very great. Meanwhile, two or three horses were sent to aid Cortes in his retreat, and a youth upon one of them contrived to reach him, though the others were lost. At last he and a few of his men succeeded in fighting their way to the broad street of Tlacuba, where like a brave captain, instead of continuing his flight, he and the few horsemen who were with him turned round and formed a rear-guard to protect his retreating troops. He also sent immediate orders to the King's Treasurer and the other commanders to make good their retreat; orders the force of which was much heightened by the sight of two or three Spaniards' heads which the Mexicans, who were fighting behind a barricade, threw amongst the besiegers.

We must now see how it fared with the other divisions. Alvarado's men had prospered in their attack, and were steadily advancing towards the market-place, when, all of a sudden, they found themselves encountered by an immense body of Mexican troops, splendidly accoutred, who threw before them five heads of Spaniards, and kept shouting out "Thus will we slay you, as we have slain Malinché and Sandoval, whose heads these are." With these words, they commenced an attack of such fury, and came so closely to hand with the Spaniards, that they could not use their cross-bows, their muskets, nor even their swords. One thing, however, was in their favour. The difficulty of their retreat was always greatly enhanced by the number of their allies; but on this occasion the Tlascalans no sooner saw the bleeding heads, and heard the menacing words of the Mexicans, than they cleared themselves off the causeway with all possible speed.

The Spaniards, therefore, were able to retreat in good

350 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

order; and their dismay did not take the form of panic, even when they heard from the summit of the Temple the tones of that awful drum made of serpent's skin, which gave forth the most melancholy sound imaginable, and which was audible at two or three leagues' distance.¹ This was the signal of sacrifice, and at that moment ten human hearts the hearts of their companions, were being offered up to the Mexican deities.

A more dangerous, though not more dreadful, sound was now to be heard. This was the blast of a horn sounded by no less a personage than the Mexican King—which signified that his captains were to succeed, or to die. The mad fury with which the Mexican troops now rushed upon the Spaniards was "an awful thing" to see; and the historian, who was present at the scene, writing in his old age, exclaims, that, though he cannot describe it, yet, when he comes to think of it, it is as if he sees it "visibly" before him,² so deep was the impression it had made upon his mind.

But the Spaniards were not raw troops; and terror, however great, was not able to overcome their sense of discipline and their duty to each other as comrades. It was in vain that the Mexicans rushed upon them "as a conquered thing" (*como cosa vencida*); they reached their station, served their cannon steadily—although they had to renew their artillerymen,—and maintained their ground.

The appalling stratagem adopted by the Mexicans—of throwing down before one division of the Spanish army some of the heads of the prisoners they had taken from another division, and shouting that these were the heads of the principal commanders—was pursued with great success. They were thus enabled to discourage Sandoval, and to cause him to retreat with loss towards his quarters.

¹ "As we were thus retreating we continually heard the large drum beating from the summit of the chief temple of the city. Its tone was mournful indeed, and sounded like a very instrument of the Demon; and its noise so great that it could be heard at two or three leagues distance."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 152.

² "With what terrific fury they rushed on us and fell under our swords is a thing of dread which I am unable to describe, though even at this moment it comes vividly to my mind, as though I saw it visibly again."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 152.

They even tried with success the same stratagem upon Cortes, throwing before his camp, to which he had at last retreated, certain bleeding heads, which, they said, were those of "Tonatiuh" (Pedro de Alvarado), Sandoval, and the other *teules*. Then it was that Cortes felt more dismay than ever, "though," says the honest chronicler, who disliked the man, but admired the soldier, "not in such a manner that those who were with him should perceive in it much weakness."¹

After Sandoval had made good his retreat, he set off, accompanied by a few horsemen, for the camp of Cortes, and had an interview with him, of which the following account is given. "O Señor Captain! what is this?" exclaimed Sandoval; "are these the great counsels, and the artifices of war which you have always been wont to show us? How has this disaster happened?" Cortes replied, "O son Sandoval! my sins have permitted this; but I am not so culpable in the business as they make out, for it is the fault of the Treasurer, Juan de Alderete, whom I charged to fill up that difficult pass where they routed us, but he did not do so, for he is not accustomed to wars, nor to be commanded by superior officers." At this point of the conference, the Treasurer himself, who had approached the captains in order to learn Sandoval's news, exclaimed, that it was Cortes himself who was to blame; that he had encouraged his men to go forward; that he had not charged them to fill up the bridges and bad passes,—if he had done so, he (the Treasurer) with his company would have done it;—and, moreover, that Cortes had not cleared the causeways in time of his Indian allies. Thus they argued and disputed with one another, for no one hardly is generous in defeat to those with whom he has acted. Indeed, a generosity of this kind, which will not allow a man to comment severely upon the errors of his comrades in misfortune, is so rare a virtue, that it scarcely seems to belong to this planet.²

¹ BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 152.

² [Mr. H. H. Bancroft maintains that Juan de Alderete could not have been the guilty person, and quotes Cortes himself in his despatches to the effect that Alderete retreated without loss, owing to the care taken in filling the channels (*Mexico*, i, p. 659).]

There was little time, however, for altercation, and Cortes was not the man to indulge in more of that luxury for the unfortunate than human nature demanded. He had received no tidings of what had befallen the Camp of Tlacuba, and thither he despatched Sandoval, embracing him and saying, "Look you, since you see that I cannot go to all parts, I commend these labours to you, for, as you perceive, I am wounded and lame. I implore you, take charge of these three camps.¹ I well know that Pedro de Alvarado and his soldiers will have behaved themselves as cavaliers, but I fear lest the great force of those dogs should have routed them."

The scene now changes to the ground near Alvarado's camp. Sandoval succeeded in making his way there, and arrived about the hour of Vespers. He found the men of that division in the act of repelling a most vigorous attack on the part of the Mexicans, who had hoped that night to penetrate into the camp and to carry off all the Spaniards for sacrifice. The enemy were better armed than usual, some of them using the weapons which they had taken from the soldiers of Cortes. At last, after a severe conflict, in which Sandoval himself was hurt, and in which the cannon shots did not suffice to break the serried ranks of the Mexicans, the Spaniards gained their quarters, and, being under shelter, had some respite from the fury of the Mexican attack.

There, Sandoval, Pedro de Alvarado, and the other principal captains were standing together and relating what had occurred to each of them, when, suddenly, the sound of the sacrificial drum was heard again, accompanied by other musical instruments of a similar dolorous character. From the Camp of Tlacuba the great Temple was perfectly visible, and, when the Spaniards looked up at it for an interpretation of these melancholy tones, they saw their companions driven by blows and buffetings up to the place of sacrifice. The white-skinned Christians were easily to be distinguished amidst the dusky groups that surrounded them. When the unhappy men about to be sacrificed had reached the

¹ BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 152.

lofty level space on which these abominations were wont to be committed, it was discerned by their friends and late companions that plumes of feathers were put upon the heads of many of them, and that men, whose movements in the distance appeared like those of winnowers, made the captives dance before the image of Huitzilopochtli. When the dance was concluded, the victims were placed upon the sacrificial stones; their hearts were taken out and offered to the idols; and their bodies hurled down the steps of the Temple. At the bottom of the steps stood "other butchers" who cut off the arms and legs of the victims, intending to eat these portions of their enemies. The skin of the face with the beard was preserved. The rest of the body was thrown to the lions, tigers, and serpents. "Let the curious readers consider," says the chronicler, "what pity we must have had for these, our companions, and how we said to one another, 'Oh! thanks be to God, that they did not carry me off to-day to sacrifice me.'"¹ And certainly no army ever looked upon a more deplorable sight.

There was no time, however, for much contemplation; for, at that instant, numerous bands of warriors attacked the Spaniards on all sides, and fully occupied their attention in the preservation of their own lives.

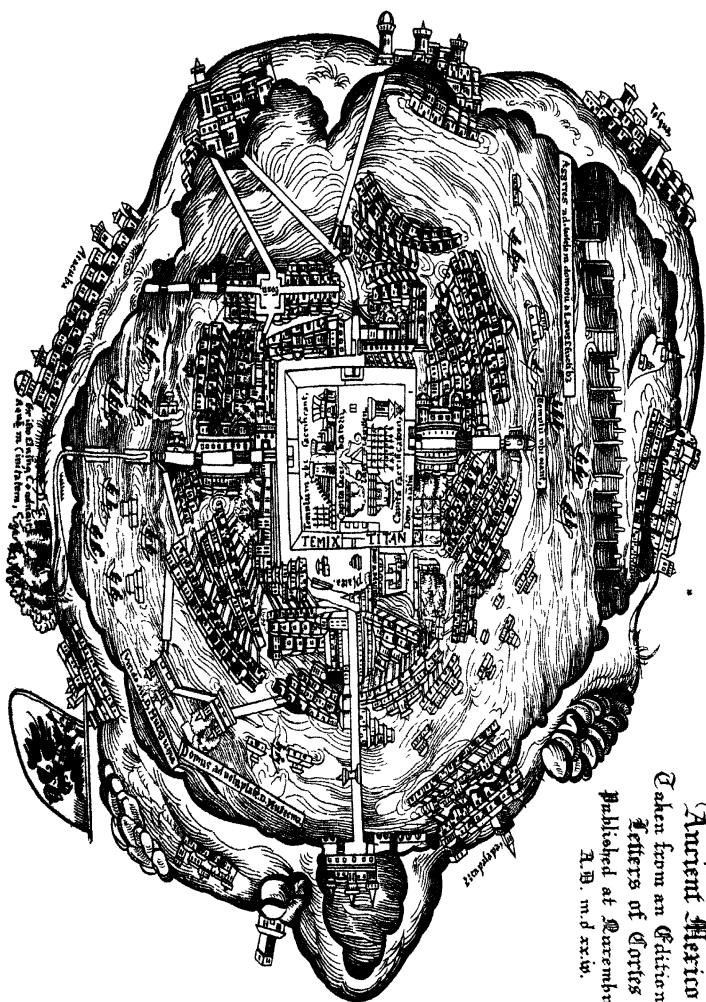
Modern warfare has lost one great element of the picturesque in narrative, namely, in there being no interchange now of verbal threats and menaces between the contending parties; but in those days it was otherwise, and the Mexicans were able to indulge in the most fierce and malignant language. "Look," they said, "that is the way in which all of you have to die, for our gods have promised this to us many times." To the Tlascalans their language was more insulting, and much more minutely descriptive. Throwing to them the roasted flesh of their companions and of the Spanish soldiers, they shouted, "Eat of the flesh of these *teules*, and of your brothers, for we are quite satiated with it; and, look you, for the houses you have pulled down, we shall have to make you build in their place much better ones with

¹ BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 152.

stones, and laminæ of stones, and likewise with hewn stone and lime, and the houses will be painted.¹ Wherefore, continue to assist these *teules*, all of whom you will see sacrificed."

The Mexicans, however, did not succeed in carrying off any more Spaniards for sacrifice that night. The Spanish camp had some few hours of repose, and some time to reckon up their losses, which were very considerable. They lost upwards of sixty of their own men, six horses, two cannon, and a great number of their Indian allies. Moreover, the brigantines had not fared much better, on this disastrous day, than the land forces. But the indirect consequences of this defeat were still more injurious than the actual losses. The allies from the neighbouring cities on the lake deserted the Spaniards, nearly to a man. The Mexicans regained and strengthened most of their positions; and the greatest part of the work of the besiegers seemed as if it would have to be done over again. Even the Tlascalans, hitherto so faithful, despaired of the fortunes of their allies, and could not but believe, with renewed terror, in the potency of the Mexican deities, kindred to, if not identical with, their own. Accordingly, they departed to their homes; and in the camp of Cortes no Indian remained but Ixtlilxochitl, the brother of the King of Tezcuco, with about forty friends and relations,—in the camp of Sandoval, the Cacique of Huaxocingo with about fifty men,—and in Pedro de Alvarado's camp, the brave Chichimecatl with two other chiefs and eighty Tlascalans. In a word, not more than two men out of every thousand of the allies remained to aid the Spaniards.

¹ BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 152.



Ancient Mexico.
 Taken from an Edition of the
 Letters of Cortes
 Published at Buxemburg
 A. D. m. d. xx. iv.

CHAPTER II

CONSEQUENCES OF THE DEFEAT — THE SIEGE LANGUISHES —
CORTES SENDS AID TO HIS INDIAN ALLIES — THE ALLIES
RETURN TO THE CAMP OF CORTES—THE SIEGE IS PRESSED
— THE MEXICANS WILL NOT TREAT WITH CORTES —
MEXICO IS TAKEN

THE King of the Mexicans improved his victory by sending round the news of it to his tributaries, informing them how successful he had been, assuring them that he would soon destroy the rest of the Spaniards, and begging them on no account to make peace with the enemy. The vouchers which his messengers carried were two heads of horses and some heads of Christians ; and these trophies told the tale of victory in an undeniable manner.

One cannot always sympathize with one's Christian friends, and it is impossible not to feel occasionally some satisfaction when the beleaguered party, wronged as they had been in every way by the besiegers, and making one of the most gallant defences ever known in the history of sieges, should gain some advantage. The siege was not absolutely stopped on account of this defeat, but still the city had some relief. In the camp of Alvarado, for instance, where the men had seen but too clearly what was the fate of captives, there was no movement for four days ; and, strange to say, the first attack on that side was, according to Cortes, devised and led by Chichimecatl, the brave Tlascalan. In the camp of Cortes little was attempted, and less effected, for ten days ; and no entrance was made by the Spaniards which reached so far into the city as the Plaza, a spot which had been gained by them, as may be recollected, at an early stage of the proceedings.

The main cause, however, of this apparent inactivity is one which will surprise the reader, but, when well

356 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

considered, will give him a great insight into the depth of policy of Cortes. At such a juncture an ordinary commander would have kept all his resources closely about him, and would not have been induced to send away a single man. But Cortes sent out a considerable force to assist his Indian allies of the town of Cuernavaca, who were suffering from the attack of some hostile Indians of a neighbouring city belonging to the Mexican faction. His own men disapproved of this, as it was natural that they should, and said that it was destruction to take men from the camp.¹

Cortes also sent assistance to the Otomies, who were much pressed by the inhabitants of the province of Matalcingo, a people on whose success the Mexicans at that time placed great dependence.

The expeditions mentioned above were successful. The wounded men in the camp began to recover.² By great good fortune Cortes, at this juncture, received some gunpowder and some cross-bows from his town of Villa Rica; and the siege was recommenced.

The politic conduct of Cortes in sending succours to

¹ "Much opposition, and said that it was destruction to take men from the camp."—LORENZANA, p. 272.

² The few Spanish women who were present at this siege, and of whom honourable mention ought to be made, must have been a great comfort to the wounded Spanish soldiers. One of them, named Beatriz de Palacios, a mulatto, was not only useful in nursing the sick, but she would saddle the horses of her husband's troop, and was known to take his place as sentinel:—"Beatriz de Palacios, a mulatto, helped much in this blockade when Cortes was before Mexico. She was the wife of a soldier named Pedro de Escobar, and served her husband and his comrades so well that he being wounded sometime in fighting, she stood guard and sentinel for him with great care; and leaving her arms she would go into the fields, collect medicinal herbs, and prepare them for her husband and his companions. She would dress wounds, saddle horses, and do other things like any soldier; and she and others were those who cured Cortes and his companions when they came wounded to Tlascala, making them use dressings of the linen of the country. When Cortes desired to leave these women to rest at Tlascala, they told him that it was not well that Castilian women should leave their husbands going on campaign, and that if their husbands were to die they would die with them. These women were Beatriz de Palacios, Maria de Estrada, Juana Martin, Isabel Rodriguez, and the wife of Alonso Valiente, as well as others."—TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. 4, cap. 96.

those of his Indian allies who were endangered, must have done good service in bringing them all back to his camp. They began to flock in, and, after receiving a lecture from Cortes, in which he told them that they were deserving of death, they were taken again into his favour, and employed against the common enemy.

On the other hand, the Mexicans remained as stiff-necked as ever. They had already endured forty-five days of siege: their allies had been conquered; and they themselves were beginning to feel the effects of starvation. But their resolution only rose with their difficulties, and misery lent strength to their resolves. "We found them with more spirit than ever,"¹ is the expression of Cortes in describing their conduct. He, therefore, though very unwillingly, came to the conclusion that he must destroy their city bit by bit, a necessity which must have been a great vexation to him, for he declares that Mexico was "the most beautiful thing in the world" (*la mas hermosa cosa del Mundo*). This plan of destruction he proposed to execute thoroughly, pulling down the houses of every street as he gained it; making that which was lofty level, and that which was water dry land.²

On the first day of recommencing the attack, he was met and delayed by feigned proposals for peace; but, these coming to nothing, he began to execute his plan of gradual demolition, and as he had the assistance of one hundred and fifty thousand Indian allies, and as destruction is always a rapid process, he accomplished great things.

The next day he made his way into the Square, and ascended the highest platform of the Temple, because, as he says, he knew it vexed the enemy much to see him there. A stranger sight, one more animating to the Spaniards, more discouraging to the Mexicans, more picturesque in itself, and fraught with more matter for stern reflection, cannot well be imagined. It was no

¹ "The more we said to them of these things the less indication they gave of weakening, but in fighting and all their stratagems we found them with more spirit than ever."—LORENZANA, p. 279.

² "Converting what was water into dry land."—LORENZANA, p. 279.

hideous Idol-god of War that had stepped down from its pedestal, but a majestic living man, clad in resplendent armour, who directed the fight below, and fulfilled the prophecies which had been uttered by the priests and necromancers—those safe and easy prophecies of disaster, sure to be fulfilled, at some time or other, in the life of any man, or any people, prophesied against. When night came on, the Spaniards and their allies retired, pursued by the Mexicans, but still, by means of ambuscades, contriving in their retreat to slay many of their enemies. Thus, with little variation, the siege continued for several days, until, by an ambuscade more dexterous than usual, Cortes contrived to cut off five hundred of the bravest and foremost men of the city, whom his cannibal allies devoured.¹

Cortes thinks that the result of the ambuscade just recorded was most advantageous for the besiegers, and was the cause of the city being speedily subdued. But, indeed, it is evident that the brief success which the enemy attained, when Cortes, overcome by importunity, made that injudicious attack upon the city, was the expiring effort of the Mexicans. It appears that they were suffering now the extremes of hunger, going out at night to fish in the waters about their houses, and seeking a miserable sustenance in herbs and roots. Upon the wretched people so employed Cortes made an onslaught very early in the morning, and slew eight hundred of them, for the most part women and children.

Meanwhile, the Indian allies of Cortes thickened around the contest, as a flock of birds of rapine over carrion, and darkened the outskirts of the devoted city. They came in such multitudes, that, as he himself says, there was no taking any account of them. The proud Mexico, hitherto unconscious of a conqueror, was penetrated by the Spanish forces on all sides, till at length the marketplace was gained by the troops of Alvarado, and free communication was opened and maintained between his camp and that of Cortes. It is curious to note the

¹ "That night our allies were well supplied for supper, since they took the bodies of all the slain and cut them up for food."—LORENZANA, p. 283.

change in the language now addressed by the Mexicans to the Tlascalans and the other Spanish allies. When the townsmen saw these Indians burning and destroying on all sides, they tauntingly bade them continue doing so, as they would have to build up anew what they were then destroying, if not for them (the Mexicans), at least, for their own friends, the Spaniards.¹ Cortes afterwards comments upon this prophecy in a manner that is anything but chivalrous or gentlemanly (indeed, conquerors on their own account seldom are distinguished gentlemen),² for he adds, "In this last respect it pleased God that they turned out to be true prophets, for they, the allies, are those who are commencing to rebuild."³

Cortes now possessed no less than seven-eighths of the city, as he perceived on looking from a great tower which adjoined the market-place. Still, the enemy did not give way, and, as the powder of Cortes was failing, he caused a catapult to be constructed, and placed on a raised platform, twelve feet in height, which was in the middle of the market-place, whereon the Mexicans had been accustomed to hold their games, and whereon, as I imagine, gladiatorial shows had been performed. But this catapult was not constructed properly, and failed to terrify the enemy. The greater part of them were now, however, only food for an almost unresisted slaughter, which, after two or three days' interval, was recommenced. The Spaniards found the streets full of women and children, and other helpless persons, dying of hunger. Cortes renewed his proposals for peace. The warriors in Mexico gave only dissembling answers. The conflict was accordingly renewed, and twelve thousand citizens perished on this occasion, for there was no saving their lives from the cruelty of the Indian allies.⁴

The next day the Mexicans, seeing the multitudes that

¹ LORENZANA, p. 286.

² Julius Cæsar always excepted.

³ LORENZANA, p. 286.

⁴ "So great was the mortality that the number killed and taken exceeded twelve thousand souls. Our allies practised such cruelty that on no account would they spare the lives of any, although greatly reproved and punished by us."—LORENZANA, p. 291.

were arrayed against them, and that, to use the graphic language of Cortes, there was no room for them, except upon the dead bodies of their own people, demanded a conference; and when Cortes arrived at a certain barricade he was met by some of the principal men. Their address to him savoured of a wild despair, but did not look as if they had any authority to treat for peace. They asked why,—since he was a Child of the Sun, and the Sun in so short a time as one day and one night went round the whole world,—did not Cortes as swiftly finish their slaughter, and release them from such suffering; for now they desired to die, and to go to their Huitzilopochtli, who was waiting for them to rejoice with.¹ Cortes said everything in reply which could induce them to treat for peace; but all his efforts were in vain. He also sent to them one of their principal chiefs, whom he had captured, and who, after listening to the arguments of Cortes, had promised to do his utmost to promote peace. This Chief was received with reverence by the Mexicans, and brought before Quauhtemotzin, the King; but, it is said, that, when he began to talk of peace, the King immediately ordered him to be slain and sacrificed. It seems that the Mexicans, as often happens in difficult negotiation, had lost the power of taking more than one view of their position. They were in that state of mind in which the variations of thought, and the vacillations of temper are alike prevented by a mental process, which, if it were conscious and intentional, might be aptly illustrated by the practice of those desperate or determined captains who nail their colours to the mast. In fine, they were under the dominion of a “fixed idea,” and the only answer which Cortes received to his overtures for peace was a furious attack on the part of the Mexicans, who exclaimed that their only wish was to die. Many of them were slain, and the Spanish captains returned to their camps for that day.

¹ “That since they regarded me as a Child of the Sun, and the Sun in so short a time as a day and night revolved round the whole world, therefore I ought to despatch them as quickly as possible, and so release them from such misery; for they desired to die and go to Heaven to their Ochilobus, who was waiting to rejoice with them.”—LORENZANA, p. 292.

The next day Cortes made an entry into the city, but did not attempt to penetrate beyond that part of it which he had already gained. On the contrary, approaching a barricade, he addressed some of the Mexican chiefs whom he knew (Cortes seems to have possessed in a high degree the royal accomplishment of remembering faces), and asked them why their King did not come to treat with him about peace? Finally, after some delay, it was agreed that on the next day the King should come to confer with Cortes in the market-place, and Cortes accordingly caused a lofty platform to be prepared for the interview.

But when the time for the conference arrived, instead of the King, there came five of his principal lords, who made excuses for him, saying that he feared to appear before the Spanish General. Cortes did all that he could to win over these chiefs, giving them food,—by their ravenous way of devouring which, he perceived how pressing was their hunger. He also sent some food as a present for the King. The envoys did not, however, hold out any hope that Quauhtemotzin would attend a conference. Still Cortes persevered in sending assurances by them to the King, that he might come in safety; and so this conference ended.

Early on the ensuing morning the five chiefs repaired to the camp of Cortes, and said that their King had consented to meet him in the market-place; and Cortes, therefore, did not allow his Indian allies to enter the city. But when he had gone himself to the appointed spot, and had waited several hours, and the King did not make his appearance, Cortes summoned in the allies, the battle, or rather the slaughter, recommenced, and on that day there were slain, or taken prisoners, no fewer than forty thousand Mexicans. So great were the cries and lamentations of the women and children, that there was no person (Cortes means no Spanish person) whose heart it did not break to hear them.¹ But the Spaniards could not prevent the slaughter, for they were only about nine hundred, and

¹ LORENZANA, p. 296.

[“The truth is Cortes desired with the monarch to secure his treasure, else he would not long have stayed his bloody hand.”—Mr. H. H. Bancroft.]

the allies more than one hundred and fifty thousand in number.

The final day of Mexico had come. The besieged retained now only a small corner of their city. Their King, instead of occupying one of those spacious palaces, in comparison with which the royal dwellings of the Old World were poor and mean, was obliged to take refuge in a boat. The order of the day, on the part of the Spaniards, was as follows:—Sandoval was to force his way with the brigantines into a deep part of the lake at the rear of those houses which were still held by the Mexicans.¹ Alvarado was to enter the market-place, but was not to commence his attack until Cortes should order him to do so by a signal agreed upon,—namely, the firing of a musket. Cortes himself was to bring up three heavy cannon, in order to be able to inflict severe loss upon the Mexicans without coming to close combat with them, for, with their vast numbers, they might suffocate the Spaniards, if the ranks were once intermingled.

All these arrangements having been made, and the approaches commenced, Cortes ascended to a terraced roof; and, from that height, addressed some of the principal men of the city, whom he knew, asking them why their King would not come, and suggesting, that as they were in such extremities that resistance was impossible, they should take such measures as would prevent all of them losing their lives. They should, therefore, summon their Prince to his presence, and have no fear. Two of them departed with this message, and shortly afterwards returned with the principal person in the city next after the King, who was called the *Cihuacuatl*. He informed Cortes that the King would by no means appear before him, preferring death; that he himself was sorry for this determination, but that Cortes must do what seemed good to him. Cortes replied that the *Cihuacuatl* might return to his men, and that he and they would do well to prepare themselves

¹ According to Clavigero, this was a sort of harbour entirely surrounded with houses, where the vessels of the merchants used to land their goods when they came to the market of Tlalteilulco.—See CLAVIGERO, *Storia Antica del Messico*, tom. 3, lib. 10, pp. 227-8.

THE MEANING OF A SINGLE LIFE 363

for battle. Meanwhile, an immense number of men, women, and children made their way out towards the Spaniards, hurrying in such a manner that they cast themselves into the water, and were suffocated amidst the multitude of dead bodies that already lay there.

The dead bodies were so numerous, that they were found afterwards lying in heaps in the streets; for thus the Mexicans had concealed their losses, not liking to throw the bodies into the water for fear of their being found by the brigantines. The number of those who died from the effects of hunger, pestilence, and drinking salt water, amounted to more than fifty thousand. Fifty thousand souls! In studying wars, we acquire an almost flippant familiarity with great loss of life, and hardly recognize what it is. We have to think what a beautiful creature any man or woman is, for at least one period of his or her life, in the eyes of some other being; what a universe of hope is often contained in one unnoticed life; and that the meanest human being would be a large subject of study for the rest of mankind. We need, I say, to return upon such homely considerations as the above, before we can fairly estimate the sufferings and loss to mankind which these little easy sentences,—“There perished ten thousand of the allies on this day,” “By that ambuscade we cut off nineteen hundred of the enemy,” “In the retreat, which was well executed, they did not lose more than five thousand men,”—give indication of. It was in vain that Cortes tried to prevent the slaughter of the miserable people, who now made their way out, by posting Spaniards in the streets through which they had to pass. His Indian allies slew fifteen thousand of them on that day.

Still the chiefs and warriors, hunger-stricken, encompassed, and overlooked¹ as they were, maintained their position upon some terraces and houses, and also in boats upon the water. Cortes ordered the cannon to be discharged; but neither did this induce them to lay down their arms. It was now evening, and the Spanish General

¹ “Nor could they profit by dissimulation or any other course, because we saw their weakness and ruin very clearly.”—LORENZANA, p. 299.

364 SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA

commanded the musket to be fired which was the signal for the general attack. The Mexican position was immediately forced, and its defenders driven into the water, where some of them now surrendered. At the same moment the brigantines entered the harbour, ploughing through the fleet of Mexican canoes, which were instantly scattered in flight. A brigantine, commanded by a man named Garcia Holguin, pursued a particular canoe in which there appeared to be people of condition (*gente de manera*). His cross-bowmen in the prow were taking aim at those in the canoe, when a signal was made from it that the King was there. The canoe was immediately captured, and the unfortunate Quauhtemotzin, together with the King of Tlacuba, was found in it; and both Kings were taken at once to Cortes. Cortes received the King of Mexico with courtesy. Quauhtemotzin advanced to him and said, "I have done all that, on my part, I was obliged to do, to defend myself and my people, until I came into this state; now you may do with me that which you please"; and so saying, he put his hand upon a poignard which Cortes wore, requesting that he would kill him with it. But Cortes spoke kindly to him, and bade him have no fear. The King being captured, all opposition ceased, and what remained of Mexico was taken.¹

This day, memorable in the annals of American history, was a Tuesday, the day of St. Hippolytus, the 13th of August 1521. The siege, according to the computation of Cortes, who reckons that it began on the 30th of May, had lasted seventy-five days. We cannot give a better description of its fearful results than in the simple words of an eye-witness, who says, "It is true, and I swear 'Amen,' that all the lake and the houses and the barbicans were full of the bodies and heads of dead men,² so that I do not know how I may describe it. For,

¹ [The place of Quauhtemotzin's capture is now dry land, but local tradition points to the puente del Cabildo as the spot (Prescott's *Mexico*, ed. Kirk, 1878, p. 552).]

² It is worthy of note that the Mexicans did not, even under the pressure of famine, devour their own people; they were, therefore, cannibals only when victory furnished them with the savoury morsel of a dead enemy.

in the streets, and in the very courts of Tlaltelulco, there were no other things, and we could not walk except amongst the bodies and heads of dead Indians. I have read the destruction of Jerusalem; but whether there was such a mortality in that I do not know."¹

Thus fell the great city of Mexico. The nature of the conquest, the disposition of the conqueror, the extent of territory conquered, above all, the alliances by which the conquest was effected, all combined to produce a very different state of things from that under which, in the course of this narrative, we have seen the West India Islands conquered and depopulated. Again, the Conquest of Mexico occurring at a period when the Home Government had acquired a little more insight into the management of colonies, will also tend to make the fate of the nations now conquered very different from that of the islanders. The great extent and riches of New Spain will for some time attract the attention of the Spanish government to that country, as its chief colony; and, henceforward, even the greater islands, such as Hispaniola and Cuba, lately the centres of government, will be chiefly interesting as affording ample proof, on a small scale of the immense misgovernment which they have undergone.

By that splendid fatality which attaches itself to remarkable sites, Mexico, which had been the queen of cities in the New World, will, when it becomes Spanish Mexico, and when a beautiful cathedral is placed upon the exact spot where stood the accursed temple of the god of war—when the exquisite gardens of Montezuma have given way to formal *alamedas* (for the Spaniards love not many trees)—when the vast expanse of waters shall, by the application of cunning art, have been withdrawn, leaving wide, dreary, arid spaces of waste land,—still be a ruling, queen-like city, and still demand a large attention from the civilized world.

¹ BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 156.

THE RIVERSIDE PRESS LIMITED
EDINBURGH

DATE OF ISSUE

This book must be returned
within 3, 7, 14 days of its issue. A
fine of ONE ANN'D per day will
be charged if the book is overdue.

--

